

THE
BARDIC STORIES
OF
IRELAND.

BY
PATRICK KENNEDY,
Author of "Legendary Fictions of the Irish Celts," "The Banks of the Boro,"
"Evenings at the Duffrey," "The Fireside Stories of Ireland," etc.

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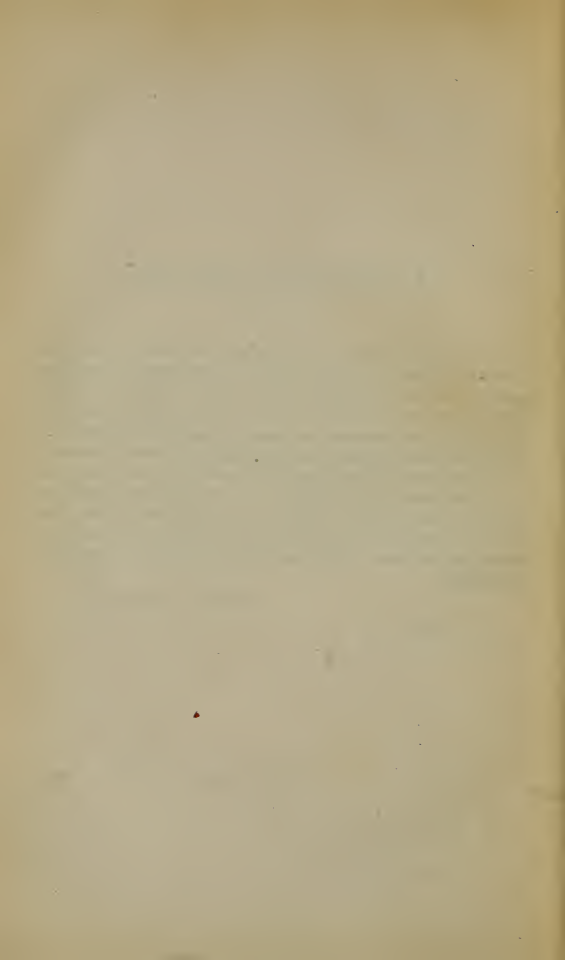
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AN APOLOGY FOR A DEDICATION.

I WOULD have done honour to my little book and myself by placing on this page the name of a certain NOBLE LADY, who has most generously assisted me in my endeavours to add something to the store of National Literature not entirely unworthy of it. I have not succeeded in obtaining her permission, so I must content myself with here recording my sincere gratitude to HER, and to my other supporters of Noble, Gentle, and Middle rank, who have taken a hearty interest in my literary efforts. My obligations are also very great towards the Editors of many Literary Journals in England and Ireland, who have done all that their conscience and judgment would allow, to present my half dozen publications in a favourable light to the Reading Public.

PATRICK KENNEDY.

Dublin, September, 1871.



P R E F A C E .

THE present collection consists of mere legends, of facts invested in legendary garb, and of historic incidents. The legends are the embodiments of pagan myths modified and degraded, some few the creation of christian poets. The invasions, changes of dynasty, etc., set down as having occurred before the building of Emania, say 300 A.C., have all some foundation of fact on which the bards raised a legendary superstructure. What are now historic legends were first related in a metrical form to assemblies in the raths of kings and chiefs. In nearly every instance they embodied the deeds of the ancestors of the high people then present, or battles, or other striking events connected with the locality, and the narrative was only moderately charged with ornamentation; but as the heroes and their deeds receded farther back from the era of the minstrel, and became consequently less interesting to the audience, he felt it expedient to surround the substance of the tradition with romantic or supernatural circumstances, and the longer the Bardic institution endured, the more heavily charged with fiction did their lays become.

In the early existence of the system, and before the minds of the unsophisticated hearers were affected for the worse by dwelling on the creations of fancy, they would be as certain to demand of the reciter if his story were true, as

an intelligent child of our or of any time is to propose the same query to parent or nurse when something outside the sphere of its own experience is related. The child's delight in a surprising story is perfected by belief in its truth, and while he remains a child he will be sufficiently mortified when he hears that such and such incidents never occurred, or that his darling prince and princess never existed. His taste becomes gradually vitiated by having his mind fed on the unsubstantial pabulum of romance. A similar change took place in early society step by step with the strengthening of the bardic influence, and to this we owe the historic and traditionary legend.

A word on the question of the knowledge or ignorance of letters among our pagan ancestors. Tighernach of Clonmacnois (eleventh century), that most dry and mistrustful of our ancient chroniclers, acknowledged that the people of his day were in possession of reliable history from the date of the building of Emania, 300 A.C. But if no written records existed before the days of St. Patrick, what confidence could the early christian historians have had in the mere traditions, or oral-poetical accounts to which they had access, or what grounds would Tighernach have to assert that the events which occurred in every generation for a lapse of seven hundred years were accurately preserved in chronicles compiled in the fifth century? The contemporaries of Tighernach, and those who lived a century or two later, would have set him down as a visionary for making such an assertion; but from his era even to ours he is, without an exception, considered the most trustworthy authority for all events which occurred before his time.

One object of this little work being to amuse and instruct young folk, and infuse into them a wish to become acquainted with the history of the country, we feel justified in assuring them that the several occupations and invasions of the country, and other remarkable events recorded down to the building of Emania did really occur, but in a much more prosaic fashion than that depicted by the bards. Greater trust may be placed in all the quasi-historical or biographical incidents succeeding this era, when the supernatural circumstances are eliminated.

As the narratives descend from the preaching of Christianity towards the conquest, the fictional element gradually disappears, though the historical events continue to be invested with the very spirit of romance. We have selected these last, not for the confidence which may be reposed in their truth, but for the romantic interest attached to them. Their truth adds value and charm to their romance, and the ROMANCE OF IRISH HISTORY is the end and aim of the present publication.

The Legendary Fictions, The Fireside Stories, and the present volume furnish a tolerably ample collection of *The Fireside and Bardic Stories of Ireland*.

If any square-toed sage, objecting to the number of mere inventions here collected, and our consequent loss of time in chronicling them, suggests the more desirable occupation of setting before our readers unadorned historical matter, let him take into account the plentiful supply of histories already before the public, the general apathy of young people towards the perusal of dry chronicles, and the probability that by the time a listless student has got to the

end of our fictions and fictitious-looking events, he or she may be laid hold on by a desire to know more about the genuine occurrences and the distinguished characters which belong to Irish history.

Readers unaccustomed to the orthography of Gaelic names, are instructed to pronounce the final *e* of every word, whether accented in the text or not, also when he finds consonants crowded in a word, to give himself little trouble about their pronunciation, and finally, never to give *c* or *g* its soft English sound.



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THE BARDIC STORIES OF IRELAND.

PARTHOLANUS AND HIS PEOPLE.

SOME three hundred years after the flood, Partholan (pr. *Parrolaun*), an exile from Migdonia (Macedonia?) in Greece, on account of the crime of parricide, landed in Inver Sceine (Kenmare River), accompanied by his wife, his three sons, and their wives, and a thousand soldiers. Partholan's favourite residence was at Inis Samer in Lough Erne. It got that name, meaning Samer's Island, from his wife's greyhound, which he killed in revenge for her infidelity, a shabby and unjust instance of retaliation. It is gratifying to think that Irishwomen in general have not followed the evil example of this early *bean thierna* of our country. Partholan died thirty years after his arrival, at Moynealta (Plain of Birds) in Meath. His sons divided the fertile island between them, and there is little recorded of the deeds of themselves and their people for three hundred years; the chief occurrences during the time being the bursting out of lakes and rivers. To weaken our confidence in the certainty of this early settlement, we are told that at the period last mentioned, the whole colony being settled between Howth (Ben Edair) and the Dublin hills, all were swept off by a plague. The present village of Tallaght (*Tam Leacht*, Plague Monument) is said to have got its name from this circumstance. The ancient writers called it *Tamleacht Muintir Parthal in*, "The Plague Monument of Partholan's People," to distinguish it from other plague cemeteries through the country.

The voyage of *Fintan* and his wife *Cesára* from Mesopotamia, their landing in the West of Ireland some short time before the flood, *Cesara's* tragic death, and *Fintan's* preservation to the time of St. Patrick, should have preceded this historic tradition, but they have been related already in *Legendary Fictions of the Irish Celts*.

THE FIGHT OF THE SOUTHERN MOYTURA.

THIRTY years after the destruction of Partholan's colony, Nemid, a hardy adventurer from the borders of the Black Sea, proceeded westwards across Europe. He probably obeyed the directions of some oracle in not making any stay till, crossing the two seas in thirty skiffs of some kind, he reached the "Wooded Isle." Our old northern city, Armagh, is said to have taken its name from his wife ; a doubtful tradition, as the word simply signifies "High Field." Nemid brought one thousand followers into the island. He seems to have been an ambitious and unscrupulous chief, for he employed four artificers of the Fomorian (African) race to build him four castles in the four quarters of the island ; and in order that no contemporary chief or king should possess piles of equal magnificence, he had the poor fellows murdered on the completion of their work. The names of the hapless gobans have been preserved—Rog, Robog, Rodin, and Rooney.

A blessing could not attend on such a vile deed. Their relatives and tribes generally gathered to the island in their long galleys ; they selected Torry island in the bleak northern sea as their rendezvous, and thence poured their hordes down on the thinly-inhabited land. If Nemid was deficient in a sound moral sense, he had no lack of animal courage. He engaged and defeated them in pitched battles in Ulster, Conacht, and Munster ; but Leinster proved fatal to him and his people. There he lost his life, and his people their liberty.

Severe was the slavery in which the Nemedians were held by these Fomorach, who are represented as savage and ogreish in their disposition. A woman was appointed their income-tax collector, on the ground that no man can be so bad as a bad woman—other things being equal. She obliged every Nemedian family in the island to bring to an appointed spot near the shore of Loch Erne, on the festival of *Samhuin* (End of Summer, 31 Oct.) three measures of cream, three measures of wheat, and three of butter.

Their burdens becoming intolerable, the oppressed race uprose to a man against their tyrant rulers, attacked them

in their stronghold in *Tor Inis* (Island of the Tower, Torry Island), and killed them nearly to a man. However, an absent Fomorach chief, returning with the crews of twenty-five galleys, assailed the victors, and so deadly and determined was the struggle on the strand, that neither party paid attention to the rising of the tide, till numbers on both sides were swept away in the strong rush of the waves.

Some of the Nemedians, under the command of Jarvan, sailed away in their wicker vessels, and passing among the western isles, afterwards called the Hebrides (Isles of St. Brigid), rounded the northern extremity of Caledonia and gained the southern coast of Sweden and the flat woody isles of Jutland. They announced to the natives that they were skilled in all the mysteries of the occult sciences, and would open colleges for general instruction. They were granted four cities, whose sites in this nineteenth century are not known, but whose names were Falias, Gorias, Finneas, and Murias.

After a couple of centuries of the exercise of their talents in teaching magic and divination, the whole of the race suddenly felt a wish to return to the land of woods, of sunny hills, of clear lakes and rivers, and of green plains, the memory of which had been vividly preserved for five generations. Accordingly they got into their galleys, and made their way west and south, bringing with them a magic spear, a magic sword, a magic cauldron, and a magic Lia Fail or stone of destiny—a gift from every one of their cities. They came in sight of the mighty giant pillars of the Northern coast, and still steering south-west, found shelter in the waters of Lough Foyle.

After the fatal fight at Torry, another party of the Nemedians had made their way from promontory to promontory, till they reached the remote land of Greece. They found people there speaking a dialect of their own tongue, and at first showing them kindness; but this state of things was soon changed. They were reduced to the rank of serfs, and where barren hills occurred, they were obliged to carry soil up to their tops in leathern sacks, and hence the name *Firbolg* (bag-men), which their descendants have ever since borne. Their condition becoming insupportable, they as-

sembled, seized on the ships of their cruel taskmasters, and sought again the Western Isle, under the command of the five leaders, Slainge, Ruaighre (Rory), Gann, Gannan, and Seangan. Everything about our early ancestors was marvellous. These chiefs landed in the mouths of five rivers, none of which is necessary to be here mentioned, except our own darling Slaney, into the bay at whose mouth steered Slainge and his craft. All the chiefs proceeding inland, met in the fertile plain of Bregia, overawed or subdued the descendants of the ill-conditioned Fomorian, took possession of some lioses, built others, cultivated the land, kept mighty herds of cattle, concluded marriages, and thanked the heavenly host and the local deities that their bitter bondage was passed, and that they had a fruitful island to inhabit, where they might live in freedom, subject only to such laws as had been handed down from father to son among their ollamhs for the general good of the community. For thirty-six years they enjoyed peace and plenty, the few clan battles that took place not being worth mention, but at the end of that halcyon period, say 800 A.C., they were roused from their rest by the unwelcome visit of their kindred, the Danaans, now returning from the Jutland Isles, 237 years after the ancestors of both peoples had separated at the strand of Torry.

It was told to King Achy (Chevalier) that a foreign people had been discovered in the fastnesses of Magh-Rein in Leitrim, and that they had penetrated so far from the great northern inlet by means of a fog raised by their skill in occult knowledge. Calling his council together, they despatched Sreng, a man of singular conduct and prowess, to ascertain the race, the country, and the present object of these intruders.

But the Danaans at the same time had come to a similar resolution, and forwarded to Achy's Court their champion Breas. The two deputies came in sight of each other in a short narrow defile, and the first impulse of each was to cover his body with his red-rimmed shield, grasp one of his spears in the act of flinging, and reconnoitre his man.

Breas was the first to speak, and Sreng was delighted to hear his own tongue, a variety of the Gaelic, spoken by

the stranger. After the exchange of a few words, they laid down shield and spear, advanced and took hands, and then, seating themselves on an overturned tree-trunk, began their conference.

Each in turn related the fortunes of his own people from the fight of Tor Inis, and then came the real business of the moment on the carpet (grass in this instance). Breas requested, on the part of his King Nuadh, half the island. It was sufficiently large for both peoples, and their first care would be to enter into a strict alliance with each other, for the common defence of the country against the Fomorach and all other foreign marauders. "This," said Breas, "will bring a great advantage to your side. Our druids are so powerful that they have only to walk through the ranks of slain after a fight, and by their words of power they restore each warrior to his vigour of yesterday." Sreng, considering this assertion a bit of boast, retorted, "*Dar do lamh* (By your hand!) O Breas, I am glad to hear of this power in your wise men, hoping that an alliance may ensue. But if the fight was between you and us, their skill would be of no avail. If we fight, every horseman's attendant kern will bring into the field a dozen pointed stakes of the quicken tree, and as each Danaan warrior falls dead on earth, his body shall be transpierced and fastened to the soil by the stake of power." Breas merely shook his head, and no more was said of druid's spell, or virtue of mountain ash.

Sreng engaged to report the proposal to his king and council on his return to Tara, and then, after making an exchange of their spears—Sreng's being heavy, sharp, and rounded at the end, Breas' slender and finely pointed—they separated with mutual expressions of esteem.

Achy and his council came to the resolution of refusing the offer, and the forces on both sides moved to the uncumbered plain of Moy Tuir (Plain of the Towers), near Cong. There the fight commenced on midsummer day, devoted to the worship of Beal (the sun), and lasted till evening. Achy and his guard being afflicted with intolerable thirst, withdrew to a spring in the neighbourhood, and thither they were followed by three Danaan chiefs.

Round the spring they struggled with intense fury, and after the lapse of a few minutes the Firbolg King and his three foemen lay bereft of life on the bloody grass.

Still undismayed, the Firbolgs, commanded by Sreng, renewed the fight every morning for four days, in the last of which he encountered the Danaan King, and by a mighty stroke which clove his shield in two, he swept away his hand.

A skilful Druid stopped the blood, and a skilful worker in metals afterwards made a silver hand with articulated fingers, secured it on the maimed limb, and the wearer is known in the Bardic annals by the name of Nuadh Airgeadh Lamh (Nua of the silver hand).

On the fifth morning the brave Sreng, finding that he headed but three-hundred fighting men, sent a herald to Nuadh claiming the right then universally acknowledged among foes of the same race—of battle waged between equal numbers on both sides. Nuadh, either influenced by respect for the gallantry of his opponents, or feelings of race, or contempt of what so small a body could effect, invited Sreng and a dozen of his best warriors to meet himself and the same number of his own chiefs between both camps, and hold a conference. It was held, and an offer made by the Danaan King of the fifth part of the kingdom was accepted. All of the Firbolg family through the kingdom then repaired to Conacht, and there abode, keeping up a good understanding with the dominant Danaans. The cyclopean ruins of Dun Aengus on the south-western cliffs of Arranmore still attest their energy and skill. Down to the reign of Conn of the Hundred Fights—second century of the Christian era—their province was called *Cuigead Sreing* (Sreng's portion). The peasantry of Conacht and neighbouring portions of Ulster and Leinster at this day, are considered the descendants of the brave and stubborn Firbolgs.



THE FIGHT OF THE NORTHERN MOYTURA.

It being a stringent rule among each of the three races which held Ireland in succession, that no man suffering

under loss of limb or organ of sense could sway the sceptre, Nuadh was obliged to resign office and endure a life of privacy till his skilful surgeon, Dianceacht, could drive pain and suffering from his mutilated limb, and his equally skilful artificers fashion a hand of silver with which he would be in a sense able to execute the functions of that which he had lost.

Breas, whom we have seen discharge the duty of envoy, ruled the kingdom as viceroy, and did all in his power to convert the very moderate degree of authority vested in the Celtic kings into absolute power. By various arts he contrived to leave but a shadow of authority to his chiefs, and in the indispensable virtue of a monarch of old days he was wretchedly deficient: there went abroad a homely saying concerning him, that "the knives of his people were not greased at his table, nor did their breath smell of his ale."

This became insupportable, and the discontent and resentment of the chiefs was brought to a climax by the reception the poet and satirist Cairbre, son of the poetess Etan, received at the court. This gay professor coming to the palace in the afternoon, was surprised to find no concourse of chiefs or even high household officers to listen to his recitations when the early evening meal was over. Breas and his family took their solitary meal in private, and the irate bard was shown to a room where was neither chair, fire, nor bed, and where three small cakes placed on a small and mean table represented the measure of Breas's hospitality both as to food and rest. Cairbre appeared before the household next morning, and instead of the eulogium which would have rewarded a hospitable reception to the man of songs, he poured out invectives on Breas's systems of political and household economy, and denounced his unworthy treatment of the bardic body by the style in which he, its representative, had been fed and lodged. Breas appearing at the conclusion of the poetic satire, was surprised to find no resentment shown by his audience. When the bitter lampoon was ended, there was a universal clucking of tongues against palates, raising of hands and eyes, and a sudden scattering of the auditors, each to the scene of his proper functions. The offended viceroy would

have punished the satirist on the spot, but his hands were held by the universal respect paid to the bardic profession.

Ill news has a swift foot. The poet directed his steps to the lios of a neighbouring chief, and after the evening meal he found himself surrounded by a crowd of flaiths and their followers, and in their presence he uttered a tirade of bitter sarcasm and contempt on the beggarly despot that ruled them rather like slaves than men of noble birth. "Alas," cried one, "that the princely and generous Nuadh is unable to wield sword or cast lance ! otherwise to-morrow's noon would see him restored to his throne, and the man of the three wretched cakes driven forth." "Your loyal wish is not far from fulfilment," said the owner of the fort, and at his signal stepped from an inner room the noble Nuadh, the hand supposed powerless vigorously grasping the shield strap, and soon convincing the chief men in the assembly by the gripe it took on hand and arm, that their regretted king was again fitted to be their chief in fight as well as council.

Breas did not await the return of Nuadh to the royal dun. Neither attendant nor guard staid by him when the restoration of the king was reported, and thus deserted, he made his way to the coast, and thence to the stronghold of his father—a chief of the pirates—in an isle off Alba. Though the father was a pirate, he was anything but a niggard, and the three small cakes may be said to have disagreed with him as much as they had done with Cairbre. However, blood was thicker than water, and he furnished his son with ships and men, and recommended him to the favour of two great chiefs of their race, one being the redoubted Balor of the Evil Eye. So numerous were the new allies, that their war galleys reached from an island of the Hebrides even to the northern coast of Erin. The forces disembarking proceeded to an advantageous spot in Sligo, which has since borne the same name (Moytura) as the field where Breas had distinguished himself a score of years before.

Both parties not only prepared to destroy each other with the steel or sharp bronze, but called in the aid of their druids and wise women. King Nua had the advan-

tage of possessing two of the bravest and wisest chiefs in the world, Lucha and Daghdá. These, calling their smiths, their *cerds* (silver and brass workers), their carpenters, their surgeons and sorcerers, their poets and their witches together, ascertained what service each could perform, and set them to work accordingly.

Daghdá knew by his druidic skill that the sorcerers of the Fomorach had woven such spells against the arms of the Danaans that they would be of no more avail than rotten twigs in the ensuing battle. So he pronounced charms and spells on the hands of a renowned craftsman, who forged spears and swords as quickly as a score of men working together could have done. The chief druid of the Fomorach finding his charms counteracted, discovered the cause by his knowledge of occult things, and paid a visit to the workshop of the Danaan artist. He, beholding the sorcerer approach, became aware by his inward sight of the presence of a mortal foe, and made a sign to his assistant to be on his guard. The stranger entering repeated some words of blessing, which he counteracted at the moment by a motion of his thumb, and then expressing his surprise at the excellence of the workmanship, began to handle a bunch of newly finished spears. The gobán, seeming to pay no attention to his presence, went on with his work, and the intruder, still pretending to poise and examine a spear, on a sudden darted it with force at his heart. But equally quick was the eye and hand of the assistant. Before the missile left the druid's hand, he felt the lance of the faithful helper tear through his neck. In a moment he was on the floor choking in his blood, and his weapon, diverted from its aim, quivering in the door-post.

At last came the day of fight, and the two forces met, each prepared to extirpate the other wholly, or perish in the effort. Desperately did the battle proceed, but the Danaans were better able to meet wounds and bruises than their foes. The skilful physician Dianceacht, his daughter Ochtriúil, and his sons Airmedh and Mioch, had previous to the battle gathered the chief sanative herbs in Erin from the *Lus-Magh* (Plain of Herbs) in the present King's County, and had therewith composed a medical bath, reciting in-

cantations during and after preparation. Their wounded men being brought to this pool of health, and immersed, were restored to their strength of the morning, and enabled to resume the struggle.

The fortune of the fight at last fell to the upholders of justice, the Danaans, but their king fell by the hand of Balor of the Evil Eye. He had but a short time to enjoy his success. A *Lia Milidh* (Champion's stone), flung from the strong hand of Lucha, crashing into his evil eye, drove it out through the back of his head, and ended his evil career.

Lucha of the long arm, who performed this meritorious deed, was the next monarch of the Danaans. He wore the crown and sceptre of Ard Righ for forty years, and did all in his power for his subjects' weal. Tailte, a Spanish princess, and widow of Achy, the brave Firbolg king, had superintended the education of Prince Lucha, and with such judgment and good will, that he always loved her as his mother. To commemorate her memory he instituted the national festival at Tailtean, in Meath, to be held on every first of August, the day of her death. Tournaments and other martial games took place on these occasions, marriages were agreed on, and engagements made for service.

The month was thenceforward called *Lugh nas* (Memorial of Lucha) from the king's name, and perhaps the English *Lammas* owns the same derivation.

A thread of true history runs through these two historic legends. Students of our annals will get much information concerning the antiquities of the Southern Moytura, and the certainty of a severe engagement having been once fought there, from Sir William Wilde's *Lough Corrib*.

THE CHILDREN OF TUIRREANN.

WHILE the Danaan kings held sway, the Fomorian made another attempt to gain possession of the country, but were bravely opposed by a chief named Lucha. This hero being much straightened on one occasion by the foreign intruders, despatched his father, Cian Mac Ceinte, and his

two brothers, to different parts of the island to summon aid. Cian, passing over the plains of Louth, saw approaching him the Firbolg brothers—Bran, Ur, and Urchorba, three of his deadliest foes. Knowing himself to be no match for them all, and espying some pigs on the plain near him, he struck himself with a druidic wand, and became one with the mightiest of the animals. Bran, the most acute of the brothers, alone saw what had occurred, and revealed it to the other two : but they considered the capture of their foeman very uncertain, owing to the number of the swine. He, however, striking them with his druidic wand, they became dogs on the instant, and instinctively found out the disguised warrior, and gave chase. Bran launched a javelin, which pierced the outward disguise of Cian, and so, being rendered incapable of flight, he asked for life. Meeting a stern refusal, he begged permission to resume his human shape. This being granted, he exultingly enlarged on the much greater eric they would have to pay to his redoubted son Lucha, for slaying him in his own form rather than in that of the swine. This did not stay their hands : they killed him on the spot, and buried him where he fell ; but on going forward for some distance, and looking back, they saw the body above ground. They had to return and enter the body twice ; but on the third occasion, the grave having been made exceedingly deep, it troubled them no more.

After Lucha had settled the business of the Fomorians, he became uneasy at not hearing from his father ; and returning to the spot where he last parted from him, he traced his steps like a sleuth-dog till he stood over his deep grave. He disinterred him with a heavy heart, and paid him the usual Celtic honours, raising a mound above his remains, and inscribing his name and virtues in ogham on a pillar-stone. He then took his way to the Midchuarta at Tara, where he knew the murderers had taken refuge, and in the Ard-Righ's presence he demanded from them the eric of his father. They inquired the amount, and he modestly claimed but a few easily-obtained articles, such as a spit, a pig-skin, a chariot, a bunch of apples, a spear, three "hill-shouts," and two or three other trifles. The king allowed

that his demands were reasonable, and decreed the eric to be collected forthwith. Alas ! when the vengeful son revealed the localities and circumstances of the different prizes, the guilty brothers gave themselves up for lost. They consulted Tuirrean, their father, who told them to ask of Lucha the magic horse, *Innbhear*, given to him by his tutor, the great Mananan, son of Lear. "He will refuse you," said he ; "so he will be obliged by law of geasa to grant you your next request, which must be, the magic boat of the same mighty sage." By aid of this boat they secured, but with a world of trouble, all the articles except the spit and the three "hill-shouts," which, through Lucha's magic influence, had escaped their memory. They went on their way again, recovered the spit in an island in the great western sea, and gave the three shouts on a hill in Fomor-Land, after having all been nearly wounded to death. A spear being driven through Bran's body, he had the shaft cut off at the two points where it projected from his sides, and thus returned, fearing to withdraw it, lest his life should issue forth at the same time. Even in this plight he bore his weaker brothers along. On their return, with all their commissions fulfilled, Lucha, who had the power, was besought by king and court to stretch forth his hand and prolong their lives. He remembered his murdered father, refused, and they fell lifeless on the hall floor.



THE FOUR SWANS.

DURING the possession of our island by the people of the Danaans, there lived in the northern part of the country a chief named Lear, who, having enjoyed much happiness in the society of his first wife, had sufficient courage to take a second when he lost her. A heathen, he had no Christian scruples in marrying his former wife's sister ; in fact, he considered that in this choice he was doing the best he could for his four motherless children, Fionula (*Fion Guala*, fair shoulder), and her three brothers, Eogan, Fiachra, and Keruagh.

For some time Eva proved a loving helpmate to Lear, and a kind governess to his children ; but as he was never weary of petting and fondling them, and as it had not pleased Heaven to bless herself with offspring, she began by degrees to dislike them, and in some time this dislike grew into hatred. At last her annoyance became so great, that she was unable to rise from her bed, and in that state she dragged on a miserable life for a whole year. During her illness she was visited by druid physicians, and instructed in many an unholy spell and charm, and at last she began to recover her strength, from the hope of being able to remove the cause of her affliction.

One day while her husband was absent, she arose and ordered her chariot to be prepared, as she intended to pay her father a visit, and get the benefit of change of air. She tried once or twice on the journey to get rid of the children, without bringing suspicion on herself ; but she was baffled by the sagacity of Fionula ; and at last they arrived at a lake not far from the dwelling of her father. There she made them get down from the chariot, and all were only too eager for the delights of a bath, Fionula excepted, who looked with suspicion on all the movements of her step-mother. Eva sat on the grassy bank, and after the children had amused themselves for a while splashing about, she beckoned them to approach her. When they had come close alongside, she struck each with a charmed twig, and at the moment they were changed into beautiful swans. They still retained their consciousness ; and after a momentary enjoyment of their new powers, the sense of their misfortune came full upon them, and they uttered piercing cries. She did not wait to listen to their lamentations, but at once repaired to her father's house, and related, with every sign of sorrow, that the children on passing the lake had pressed so eagerly to be allowed to bathe that she consented ; and that, getting beyond their depth, one sunk, and the others perished in their efforts to save him. . . .

Lear being informed, on his return, of the departure of his wife and children for the court of her father, set out immediately on their track ; for he could not endure voluntary absence of a day from his darlings. As his route

lay along the edge of the lake he was struck with the beauty of the four swans; but who could describe the depth of his anguish on being accosted by Fionula, and acquainted with the transformation and miserable lot of his beloved little ones? After giving way to a violent outburst of grief, he cried out :

“At least you can spend your allotted time with me in the shadow of the trees that encircle the lake at home, and give me the comfort of seeing and speaking to you every day.”

“Even that poor solace cannot be ours,” said Fionula. “For thirty years we must inhabit this loch, and then for many a weary century we are doomed to the cold and stormy waters of Moyle, that separate the northern part of this land from the great island of Britan Maol. We are lastly to wander on the wild and fierce waters of the West, and not expect deliverance till the sweet bells of a holy messenger of heaven shall frighten away all evil powers from ‘Inis na Gloire,’ in the heart of the country of the Firbolgs. In our sorrows and sufferings, pitying heaven has given such a charm to our voices that while we sing no listener can feel or remember his sorrows. Till the rising of tomorrow’s sun, abide on the shore with your people, dear unhappy father, and be your deep sorrow forgotten !”

They began to sing, and all that were in hearing, Lear and his train, lay down on the banks, and continued through the quiet starry night in one ecstasy of transport. They fancied themselves in the blissful groves of Tir-na-n-Oge, and wished that the morning might never dawn. At sunrise the birds ceased their songs, and Lear, with desolation in his heart, repaired to the dwelling of his wife’s father.

“Dear son,” said the old man, “may your sorrow for your lost darlings be consoled ! Their spirits are in the abode of the happy ; hunger, pain, or heart-sickness shall never come near them !”

“Alas, kind father, that comfort is not mine ! They are four wretched birds, floating on that lake of sorrow ; and must hereafter endure the ice and rough waves and storms of the northern seas for the years of many generations of men before their release arrives. That hapless,

guilty woman beside you, who has lain so long in my bosom, has inflicted this mighty woe on them and on her wretched spouse."

"I attached so much value to your affection, O Lear, that I could not endure to have it shared by others."

"Guilty creature," said her father, who was a druid of power, "see how you have deceived yourself. Your husband's hatred is now your only portion, and for ages you must roam a frightful and odious figure through the cold dark mists that lie on the hill-tops." So saying, he spat in her face, and forth she flew shrieking, a wretched and horrible-looking demon of the air.

Again Lear and his relations repaired to the borders of the lake, and again were their spirits soothed by the sweet songs of Fionula and her brothers. For the long space of thirty years all the tribes of the kingdom came in succession, unyoked their chariots, reclined on the banks, and listened to the enchanting melodies of the doomed children. But at last the fatal day arose, and no notes but those of lamentation could escape from them. After bewailing their father's misery and their own, they repeated :

"We go to return no more ! Dear hapless parent, you shall never look on us, nor we on you, till blessed Patrick of the bells and psalms comes to deliver our country from the dominion of demons ! May you be comforted ! We return no more !"

So saying, they arose from the waters, and with wild wailing cries they directed their course northwards. Sorrow was strong in the hearts of all who heard their laments, and saw them depart, and the lately-thronged and gay-looking borders of the loch were soon left desolate.

While summer remained their lives were endurable, floating near the great giant pillars of the northern coasts ; but when winter came with its long nights of storm, of ice, and of snow-showers, painful and wretched was their existence.

And still from the loving woman's heart of Fionula came comfort to the souls of her hapless brothers—comfort which she herself felt not. Still they looked for their deliverance one day ; but how long were the painful and weary years before it would arrive ! When they were scattered by storms,

when their feathers were torn off, and their limbs left bleeding from rocks and ice, still would poor Fionula gather them to her side, shelter them with her wings, and utter her sweetest songs for their comfort.

Once before Lear's death, he heard tidings of them from a chosen band of young knights whom he had sent round all the coasts to search for their abiding place. When the appointed limit of their abode in the sea of Moyle came at length, they once more took wing and flew south-west, over woods, over lakes, and over the rath where they once enjoyed the careless life of happy childhood ; but their father and his tribe had been lying in the narrow house of death for centuries, and the rath was a green mound. The brave and wise Danaans had been crushed by the iron-handed sons of the Spanish Golav ; and the woody island was now portioned among the decendants of his sons, Heber, Heremon, and Ir. Still held they on their fated course, and after a weary flight they passed the rocky barriers of the great western waters ; they passed the islets that skirt the wild shore, and at last rested on the heaving stormy tides that form the "world's rim." As they sunk and rose on the long waves, their clear eyes could distinguish, far below, the vast mounds and buildings and altars, formed of mighty stones, the remains of the gigantic and sinful dwellers of an ancient Isle, overwhelmed, in remote times, for their pride and iniquities.

* * * * *

After countless years of mingled content and suffering, they were at last hemmed in by sheets of frozen water that had drifted from the great ice-island in the North Seas. Their poor limbs were fastened in the blocks, and even their wings were rendered powerless by the fierce cold.

The brothers broke forth into lamentations ; but Fionula reminded them that their woes were not to last for ever, and that even now, perhaps, the mighty man was born who was to bring the glad tidings to the isle. They said they would strive for resignation ; but as the intense cold still increased, they hoped that even feeling would be destroyed. They were at the time in close to the islet of Inis na Gloire, off what is now called the "Mullet," in Erris ; and at a

moment when their sufferings were most intense, in the pitchy darkness a sudden light flashed on their eyes from the shore, and the sweet music of silver bells came to their ears. At once their misery ceased ; they found the members of their bodies all at liberty and in a delightful state of warmth, and they burst out into a grateful chorus of music. They swam to the shore ; and after a little progress on land, they found themselves before a rude stone-building, partly fashioned from a cavern, a holy-looking man in white robes, with some children, before an altar on which stood the sign of redemption, and all employed chanting the praises of the REDEEMER and His BLESSED MOTHER. They only imperfectly felt the meaning of the words, which had a strange sound ; but they crossed the threshold without hesitation, and entranced the priest and his assistants by their appearance and the enchanting melody that came from their throats in unison with the air of the Latin hymn. They took no heed of time ; but one hymn followed another till the neighbouring shore of the continent became visible across the narrow strait. The sainted man, whose name translated is *Son of Young Hugh*, then approached his strange looking guests, and bestowed on them the blessing of the Cross, and every kind of endearment and wishes of hearty welcome.

So sorrow or desolation came no more near the children of Lear. They lived with the holy man, and received his instructions, till at last he considered them fit to be cleansed in the water of regeneration ; but here a difficulty arose from their outward shape, though they possessed human souls. Meanwhile the report concerning them went far and near, and on the Sabbath the shores of the isle were crowded, and the little bay was filled with corrachs ; and these in the boats and those on shore all listened entranced to the sacred songs of the saint and his assistant youths, accompanied by the heavenly notes of Fionula and her brothers. At last the Queen of Conacht heard of their wondrous powers, and desired her husband to send an order for their attendance at court. The son of Young Hugh requested the messengers to excuse his non-compliance. To a second embassy he declared it was beyond his power to

give up the birds; and to a third he made answer, that when the King of Heaven and a king of earth give opposite orders, they might readily judge which ought to be obeyed. The mild queen hinted to her sovereign that his duty to his wife and his own dignity obliged him to use force. He replied, that he never knew luck to attend any one who offered violence or ill language to a man of God; and the lady answered this remark by departing for her father's house, near the spot where the great and good Bryan held his court in after times.

Thrice did the poor monarch send humble messages to his life's solace, requesting her return, and thrice the only reply she deigned was, "Are the swans in the court of Conacht?" At last, forgetting his own wise and practical observation, he hurried to the holy island, favoured in after times by the presence of St. Brendan, and insisted on the swans being given up to him forthwith. "They are summoned to a higher court than thine, O king," said the holy man; "and I may not act in opposition to *my Sovereign's will.*"

Then said the rash monarch to his followers, "Seize them—gently however—and bring them along. And you," said he to his trusty giolla, "haste, and announce to your lady that the present she desires awaits her in her palace." The awed children crowded to the altar; and as the attendants reluctantly laid hands on them, their graceful forms and colours vanished, and four aged human beings, their poor bodies and limbs covered with cloaks of down, were seen extended on the flags. The king and his train were seized with pity and remorse; and poor Fionula, raising her weak trembling voice, implored the saint to baptize them without delay, as she felt the powers of life fast ebbing. The poor king bustled about, hindering rather than helping; and in a short space their souls were as pure as those of our first parents the day they were created.

"Dear father," then said Fionula, "lay us thus in the consecrated ground side by side, Eogan before me, and Fiachra and Keruagh at my back."

Her last wishes were complied with. The holy man rejoiced on their own account at their release; but sorely did

he miss their melodious notes when listening to the untrained voices of successive pupils in his choir.

The king and queen were punished for their self-will and self-seeking. May we all avoid their faults; and when we are disposed to be irritated by trifles, recall with profit the sufferings and patience of the children of Lear.

These two legends, together with that of the "Children of Usneach," to be told farther on, compose the *Tri Triugha na Sgealuigh-eachtha*, "The three Sorrows of Story-telling" of our bards. Moore's charming lay, "Silent, O Moyle, be the roar of thy waters," is founded on the present legend.

THE LAST OF THE DANAAK KINGS.

NATIVES of Ireland, when invited to dine at Guildhall with the Lord Mayor of London for the first time, cannot feel otherwise than awed by one of the grim statues that preside over the festivities. They feel as if they were likely to receive little welcome at the hands of such a truculent-looking Saxon, little suspecting him to be the representative of one of their great-great ancestors; yet so it appears to be. Finusa, son of Baath, son of Magog, son of Japhet, son of Noah, was king of Scythia, a little after the building of Babylon by Nimrod. A studious monarch he was, and particularly devoted to the acquisition of languages, seventy-two of which had sprung from the mad attempt at Shinaar. As Heber, third in descent from Shem, had not consented to the erection of the Tower of Confusion, he and his family retained the original tongue spoken by Adam, Seth, and Noah; and to his neighbourhood Finusa repaired to learn this primal form of speech, and establish schools for the correct teaching of those seventy-two dialects just mentioned. He took his son Nial as partner in this meritorious scheme, and at his death left him all the privileges, honours, and profits of these establishments, committing the unpleasant task of governing his subjects to his duller brother.

Nial's fame, as philologist, was not less than that of his great father ; it spread from Magh-Shinaar even to Egypt, and he was invited by Pharaoh, the contemporary of Moses, to visit his country, and give his subjects the benefit of his great lights and experience. There is here a trifling anachronism of a few hundred years ; but the large scale on which the bards did business did not leave them time to examine trifles of the kind.

So pleased was the King of Egypt with the performance and acquirements of Nial, that he gave him to wife his fair daughter Scota, who bore a son named Gael ; and from this mother and child we derive our titles of Scots and Gaels. The first name also belongs to us as being of Scythian descent ; but we good-naturedly handed it over to our cousins of Caledonia, as we did the "Stone of Destiny." Concerning their gratitude to us for these valuable gifts, the less said the better !

Nial lived near the present site of Alexandria, and had a pretty sized fleet at command. Sympathising with the oppressed children of Shem, it is said that he offered them the use of his ships for the purpose of escape. The offer, though not accepted, was remembered with gratitude by the Israelites. Gaeidhil, or Gael, his little son, was fastened on by a serpent while he was engaged in some boyish sports in the fields. The reptile entwined itself round his neck, on which it inflicted a wound, but application being made to the great Hebrew Law-giver, he applied his miraculous rod to the part affected, and an immediate cure ensued. The child was called Gael-Glas, from the greenish mark that remained on the skin.

Sru, a descendant of this Gael, being obliged to quit Egypt in a hurry, could only avail himself of four galleys. In these he brought his people and their property to Crete. The bards disagree somewhat on the subject of the after voyages of the colony ; some making the fleet pass into the Black Sea, and thence into the Baltic, through the connecting water which then covered the Riphæan Valley, called Sarmatia (Poland) since the central portion of Europe emerged from under the sea. From the south of Sweden

they sailed at a still later era to Spain ; the other account bringing them westwards directly into this country.

Our Scythians, having established their power in the Peninsula, lived, and loved, and fought till the birth of Gollamh, or Miles, who, being fond of adventure, went to assist his relatives the Phœnicians, and his relatives the Egyptians, and among both these distant connexions of his he obtained royal brides. These ladies presented him with eight children out of the thirty-two who called him father. Of his domestic comfort or the reverse, all the records are lost.

We shall introduce to the reader's notice three only of his sons—Heremon, Heber, and Amhergin, and his uncle Ith. This was the prince who first of his family, set foot on our coasts. Some ill-advised writers assert that he discovered our island from the top of a tower on the north coast of Spain, as he swept the horizon with a telescope. There are serious objections to this fact, arising from the principles of natural philosophy and the history of discoveries, and we shall not insist on its adoption.

No ; the fact was, that having to share his Spanish patrimony with so many, he preferred to look out for an island for himself. He landed on the northern coast, and a great concourse of the inhabitants collected to see the new comers, and ascertain their business. He mentioned that his people and they themselves were of the same blood, both having Magog for their ancestor, that his immediate relatives were in Spain, and that he was employing his leisure time visiting the neighbouring countries. In return they informed him that their three brother kings were at the moment assembled at a place a day's march south of where they stood, dividing treasure, and that if he paid them a visit he would be sure to meet a cordial welcome to their court. The hint was taken ; and next day Ith and one hundred of his followers were feasted by Mac Cuill, Mac Ceachta, and Mac Greine ; and the day following he was invited to settle the division of their treasure. He complied, and said that he had never seen an island so desirable to live in, and added that they would show wisdom by dividing it peaceably among themselves, or reigning in

succession. He was thanked for his mediation, and feasted royally ; but after his departure matters took a strange turn.

"Brothers," said Mac Cuill, "did you notice the unction and strength of the stranger's praises of our country ! We are not standing here if his intentions are sincere towards us. He is hastening to Spain, and will bring his half-hundred of brothers and their forces on our backs. But by our patron, Mananan, son of Lear, it shall not be ! Ho, there ! Sound the bugle, and gather round me all that can be equipped for a march within the quarter of a sand-glass." And about the end of that time he was treading a northward forest path at the head of a hundred and fifty men of strength and valour.

The rear-guard of the Milesians heard the tread of marching warriors behind them, and the blasts of the bugle-horns, and in a few minutes they were engaged in mortal combat with the Danaans. The fight was fierce and long ; but at last Ith received a mortal wound, and then the sole object of his son Lucha, and his faithful followers, was to carry his wounded body to the ships. They succeeded ; and, with determined wrath smouldering in their hearts, they spread all their sails to the northern breezes. The gallant barks swiftly sped over the dancing waves to Spain ; but the noble Ith did not touch its shores alive.

There was no lack of earnestness or eloquence in the address of Lucha to his relatives on his arrival ; and when the funeral rites of Ith were performed, thirty barks, each provided with thirty tried warriors and their followers, were ploughing through the rough sea that divided them from the "Woody Isle."

Mac Cuill received small thanks for his abortive attempt, which had only served to hasten and magnify the danger ; and as the available forces were not sufficient to meet the invading foe, the chief druids, at the desire of the princes, flung such darkness over the shores as the Spanish ships approached Loch Carmain (Wexford Bay), that no object could be distinguished at a yard's distance from the vessel's edge. Noises of the most frightful and lamentable character were heard at the same time ; and after a space they were able to discern, through an opening in the black

cloud, what appeared the back of an enormous pig, stretching miles and miles on either side.

A baleful light fell round it, and from its surface shot up unceasingly mighty lances, as if a hedgehog was casting its prickles. These fell in and round the boats, and dismayed the mariners; but the awful spectacle before them caused greater terror than could arise from mere personal danger. The thick dark fog still enveloped themselves, while the ghastly light played only on and round the bristling object of dread.

But a violent storm arose, and drove them at some distance from the coast, in a south-west direction; and after a long interval of terror, suffering, and labour, they ran into a harbour in the extremity of Kerry. Amhergin's wife happened to be drowned there, and it was for a long time called Inver-Sceine, from the name she bore.

Hearing that the princes were at Tara, they left a sufficient force to guard their vessels, and proceeded into the country. At Sliabh-Mish, in Kerry, they halted before a cheerful-looking rath, on the upper platform of which stood a majestic-looking woman, accompanied by a beautiful and richly-dressed concourse of ladies. She was hailed by the learned and valiant Amhergin, son of Miles, who, after complimenting her beauty, dignity, and state, begged to be honoured by the knowledge of her name. "Courteous stranger," answered she, "I am the Queen consort of Mac Ceachtha; my name is Banva, and Banva is the name of the whole island while I reign." Amhergin returned suitable thanks, and the march was renewed. At Sliabh-Eilan, in Leinster, they accosted another equally beautiful and noble-looking lady, who, with her train, had taken her station there for the purpose of looking on the strange forces. She also made a courteous reply, "I am the Royal consort of Mac Cuill. I am called Fœla, and Fœla is the name of the island while I reign." At Usneach, in Meath, they were met by Eiré, wife of Mac Greine. She gave them similar information, and would have probably given it with more pleasure if she had known that her country would keep her name much longer in memory and veneration than those of her sisters.

So at length they approached the hill fortress of Tara in the flat country of Meath, and summoned the princes to resign the government of the country into their hands for having treacherously slain their relative while on a friendly visit to their shores. Mac Greine, dressed in great splendour, and surrounded by his enchanted guards, made answer that they were not prepared to resist such forces as appeared before them. He appealed to Amhergin whether it would add to the glory of their memory in after times, when the bards would tell that they fell on a small body of fighting men and despoiled them of their possessions. "We can cast such spells upon your swords, spears, and harness, if you drive us to extremity, that they will be as little use as twigs of sallow, and loricas made of marsh reeds, but we prefer this condition, honourable both to you and us. Depart to your ships, and stand out nine waves only from the shore, and if we are not in a condition to oppose you on your next landing, we will resign the country to your stronger arms." Amhergin weighed the offer, and was induced to accept it from dread of their having recourse to magic aids. So the Gaels retraced their path to Inver-Sceine, ascended the sides of their galleys, and rowed till they were eight waves removed from land. All was quiet to this; but, as they crossed the ninth wave, such pitchy darkness fell on the water, so furious blew the wind, and so dismayed were the mariners by wild and unearthly noises, that they lost all management of the barks, and they were driven in helpless confusion all round the coast and among the rocky isles. Six valiant chiefs, sons of Milesius, were destroyed at various headlands; and at last Heber with his remnant once more gained the bay which they had imprudently quitted; and Heremon was driven into the port of Drogheda, where his brave brother Colpa perished, and left his name to the unfriendly harbour.

A few days after Heber's forces gained the shore, they were attacked near Sliabh-Mish by a strong body of the Danaans, under the command of Queen Eiré. There were lost in this fight, on the Milesian side, two chief druids—Scota, widow of Milesius, and Fais, another lady of rank. The fight was obstinate, but in the end Eiré's troops were

routed. She gallantly kept them together, and retired in good order to Tailtean, in Meath, where she met her husband and his brothers, and acquainted them with her want of success. They made the best disposition they could, and summoned the spirits of air, earth, and water to their aid. They invoked the spirit of the ocean, Mananan, but all the answers and omens were unpropitious ; they had ignored the ever-sacred claims of hospitality, and the faces of the guardian powers were averted.

So hope of victory there was none ; and when Heber and Amhergin from the south, and Heremon from the harbour of Inver-Colpa, united their forces, and attacked the three princes at Tailtean, they were received with a vigour and determination furnished by despair. After destroying many a brave Gadelian, Mac Greine, Mac Ceachta, and Mac Cuill sought the three surviving sons of Milesius, and put their strength, courage, and skill to a severe trial. But the sun of the Danaan dynasty had set, and the brave brothers perished by the might of Amhergin, Heremon, and Heber. Their chiefs, after causing the death of innumerable foes, fell exhausted on the heaps they themselves had raised ; and the devoted princesses would not survive their husbands and friends. From the appearance of the island on the approach of the Milesian Scots, it was afterwards occasionally styled *Inis na Muicé* (Isle of the Pig). So ended the dynasty of the Danaans, to whom a portion of our archæologists attribute the round towers and those mysterious cavern-buildings on whose original uses antiquaries are not unanimous.

Mac Cuill, *Mac Ceachta*, and *Mac Greine*, are in English, "Son of the Log," "Son of the Plough," and "Son of the Sun." The first was perhaps a clearer of forests ; the second, an agriculturist ; the third, an astronomer.

The Milesians having got the island into their possession, Heremon took possession of the central portion of the country, and Heber governed the south. In this latter division were two of the loveliest vales to be found in the world, but they did not fill up the cup of happiness of Heber's queen. There was one beautiful vale in which Heremon's queen took her pleasure, and if Heber would not add that to his other two, Heber's wife was determined to give him no rest night or day. As his sister-in-law was not agreeable, he was unwill-

lingly obliged to make war on his brother, but was unfortunately slain in the battle of Geashil (King's County); so his poor wife lost her husband, and vales, and all, as Æsop's dog did his piece of meat a few centuries later.

In Heremon's reign, the Picts in their journey from the east, landed in Wexford Bay, helped the natives against a marauding body of the Cymry, and afterwards proceeded to Caledonia, as related in detail in the *Legendary Fictions of the Irish Celts*. The early Christian historians were, with scarcely an exception, individuals in monastic institutions, whose special province it was to make copies of the chronicles and genealogies transmitted to them, and to eke them out with the contemporary transactions learned from visitors, or the MSS. of learned men entertained at the residences of kings or chiefs. They always began with the Mosaic narrative. Whoever put the foregoing historic romance together, had for authority some Pagan tradition of an invasion of the island by Spaniards, whose ancestors had come from the east. This was not sufficient for the Christian scribe. He felt himself bound to furnish Gollamh or Milesius with ancestors found in the Old Testament, and to supply fathers, sons, and grandsons, with romantic adventures by sea and land. The historical descent of the Milesians on the island may have occurred any time between 1350 and 750 ANTE CHRISTUM.



HOW EMANIA WAS BUILT.

ABOUT the year 300 A.C. (Keating says 400), three princes of the line of Ir agreed to reign in succession (some say twenty-one years each—an improbable circumstance). Red Hugh having reigned, and having been succeeded by the other two in order, did not live to enjoy his second span of power, and no male heir was present to take his place. Diathorba, next in succession, now put in his claim; but the Lady Macha, who, like her father Hugh, was gifted with red hair, stoutly disputed his pretensions. Taking for husband Cimbaoth, who might otherwise have caused her trouble, she gave battle to her rival, routed his forces, and killed himself; and his five sons were obliged to fly, and take refuge in the woods.

Many parties had gone in quest of the fugitive princes, but had not succeeded in capturing them. The approach of a large party would be felt before they could do anything effective, and few small detachments would venture too

near the five vigorous and undaunted young warriors. Macha feeling uncomfortable, and anxious to secure them at any risk, changed her royal robes for the more convenient garb of a huntress, shook the flour of rice on her fiery locks, and thus metamorphosed, ventured into the tangled forest where she was informed the outlaws were. It happened that she met one of them near their retreat, and he, not apprehensive of any covert design on her part, freely entered into conversation with her. The talk became very interesting, and just as he thought he was beginning to find favour in the eyes of the beautiful and stoutly-built huntress, she pinioned his arms, strongly secured them at the wrists with small but very strong whip-cord, placed a gag in his mouth, and imitated the cry of a bird. This was a signal to some of her attendants, who cautiously approached, and bore the captive, bursting with rage, to the edge of the forest. In this mode she enticed another to the same point in the wood, and secured him. Having found out the common refuge by this time, she boldly approached it, charmed the refugees by her presence, put them off their guard by her grace and animated converse, playfully mentioned her fear of weapons, and requested them to remove them from her presence and lay them in the corner of their cavern. They complied, each being very anxious to become a favorite with the charming amazon. While engaged in an exciting conversation, and totally inapprehensive of danger, they were surrounded by a score of armed men, some of whom lost no time in securing their weapons. Shame and rage took possession of the princes, but Macha's first care was to soothe them. "Brave chiefs," said she, "it is no disgrace to the boldest warrior in the world to submit to a woman. I am Macha, daughter of Aodh Rua; consent to be my friends, and neither rope nor chain shall touch your limbs." The attendants made no movement to seize them, and after a few seconds' hesitation, still under the fascination of the lady's beauty and the kindness expressed in her countenance, they approached, kissed her hand, and all quitted the forest. When Macha arrived at her fortress, in company with her captives, there was some division in the councils of her husband and chiefs concerning the out-

laws. Some were for putting them to death or imprisoning them for life, but she stoutly overruled their opinion. "She alone had secured them, and it was hers to decide on their fate." Already they were her personal friends, and they had promised to superintend the building of the new fortress, the plan of which, cut on a smooth strip of beech with her gold bodkin, she exhibited to the council. Her husband, her chiefs, and her captives found her irresistible. The fortress of Emania, whose ruins are still traceable near Armagh, arose under the superintendence of the five sons of Diathorba, and there the famous Order of the Red Branch Knights held their sittings in after times. Archæologists, adopting the opinion of the reliable chronicler, Tighernach, who died at Clonmacnois in 1083, date the commencement of reliable Irish history from the reign of Cimbaoth and Queen Macha.

From the Spanish occupation of the country no great change of dynasty occurred till the gradual occupation of the island by the Anglo-Normans, the Danes getting only possession of some maritime, and a few inland cities. The posterity of Heremon ruled Conacht and Leinster; the descendants of his brother Heber Fionn (the Fair), and of Lucha, son of Ith, ruled in Munster; and those of Heber, son of Ir, one of Heremon's brothers, in Ulster. The chiefs of these great families occasionally dislodged each other, and now one, and now another occupied the uncomfortable throne at Teamur (Tara), so called from Tea, Heremon's second wife. The Leinster kings dwelt at Naas or Dunrigh on the Barrow, near Leighlin Bridge; the Munster kings at Cashel; the Conacht kings at Rathcroghan in Roscommon; the Ulster kings at Ailleach, a great stone enclosure in the north-east of Donegal, or at Eamain near Armagh. If an ambitious provincial sovereign made war on the Ard-Righ, this last, gathering his own forces and those of the other petty sovereigns who chose to abide by him, proceeded against the insurgent. The campaign concluded with the one engagement. The defeated king scarcely ever survived: he rushed into the thickest of the fight and was there slain. His conqueror immediately was proclaimed head sovereign.

THE COURTSHIP OF LABRADH MAEN.

ABOUT 250 A.C. the wicked prince Cobhthach put to death all the posterity of his brother Laéré, King of Leinster,

except one grandson called Maen, who being dumb, and consequently ineligible to reign when come to man's estate, had his life spared. Cobhthach having attained the dignity of Ard-Righ, dwelt at Tara, leaving his grand nephew under the care of Feirceirtne the Ollamh, and Craftiné the harper, at his paternal palace of Dun-righ just mentioned.

As Maen grew, up he exhibited the most amiable qualities, and was as noble in appearance, and as active and skilful at martial exercises as any young *gaisca* in Leinster. One day while contending with a young companion at sword and buckler, and off his guard in the ardour of the martial play, he wounded his opponent, and struck him down with the force of the blow. Rushing to raise him, his emotion produced a loud exclamation. Whatever impediment had produced his dumbness was removed, and he began from that moment to attempt articulate sounds. Those who heard his first cry shouted out in joy, "*Labradh Maen*" (Maen speaks), and the expression remained on him as a name.

Cobhthach, hearing of the wonderful change in his ward, summoned him to Tara along with his tutors, and probably began to think of some means to get safely rid of him. At a public feast he asked aloud, "Who is the most munificent king or chief in Erin." Feirceintne and Craftiné answered on the moment, "Labradh Maen is that man." "Then you set him above me," said the king. "If you value him so highly you are free to follow him, for he presently leaves this court." "The loss will be more to you than to us," said they. "Depart out of Erin forthwith," said the irate monarch.

Prince and tutors, taking council, set forth, and travelled to the court of Scoriath, who held state at Fermoy. There they were feasted and comfortably lodged for seven days, and on the eighth their host inquired their names and business. They revealed these, and added, "we have been banished by the Ard-Righ." "Then you are welcome heartily to me," said he.

The young Princess Moria was the most lovely and amiable maid at that day within the four seas of Erin. She had been sought in marriage by several young princes, but

her heart remained untouched, and she would not listen to any proposal. The disappointed suitors laid plan after plan to carry her away by force, and the king and queen were kept in perpetual worry, guarding their treasure. The king kept watch by day, and the queen by night, and the young lady remained safe; but the state of things was not pleasant.

Three interviews in the presence of the father were more than sufficient to infuse the deepest affection into the hearts of prince and princess towards each other. Alas! there was no opportunity for loving declaration on one side and timid response on the other. Let Maen come early, at noon, at even, all was against him. Watch and ward were ever kept,—now by father, now by mother.

“O Craftiné, most skilled of men in divine melody,” said Maen to that trusty dependant one day, “what will become of me? I die to speak two tender words to the most amiable Moria. I think she would not return a harsh answer, but evermore the presence of father or mother renders that happiness as distant as the moon or stars.” “There is a festival to-morrow,” said the harper. “I shall during my performance give you an opportunity of speaking to your true love. If you neglect the occasion, by your hand, I shall not be to blame.”

When the feast was at end, and Craftiné called on, he repeated the sorrowful lay of the Children of Lear, accompanying his poetry by the magic music of his harp, and such a spell was cast on the imagination and feelings of every one in company, that their eyes, their ears, and their whole being were intent on the performer and his tale. No one did or could pay attention to the movements of another, nor did the king or queen perceive that the seats of Maen and Moria were without tenants. When the harper considered that the sounds of voice or harp could not reach the lovers, he changed his hand to the enthralling measure of the *Suantraighe*, which no one could hear without falling into an enchanted slumber, when their whole souls and intellects were steeped in bliss. This gave the lovers, who had already given and received their mutual declarations, time to return and take their places. Just then the musician

struck up the *Geantraighe*, which roused the slumberers, and threw all into an outrageous fit of merriment. He might if he chose have followed this with the *Goltraighe* which would bring desolation, and weeping and wailing on the assembly, but he did not abuse his power.

The queen was not long in discovering that something unusual had occurred to her daughter. Smiles and joyful lighting-up of the features were detected when she thought she was not observed by her mother, and it was not long till her secret was withdrawn from her. King Scoriath was not glad to hear the news, as the marriage would draw down the resentment of the Ard-Righ. However, Crafiné's harp and his daughter's tears had their effect. But before marriage could be solemnized, a strict injunction reached Fermoy from the evil Cobhthach that no shelter nor encouragement should be afforded to Maen nor his attendants. The fiery king would have disregarded the orders of his sovereign, but Maen dreading the result to those he so much loved, intrusted the care of his affianced to her parents and his two devoted followers, hastened on board ship, sailed to Gaul, endeared himself to the king of that country by gallant feats of arms, obtained a strong body of fighting men, landed in Loch Carmain, was joined by many of the fighting men of Leinster, surprised his evil grand uncle in Dun-Righ, and in the assault, he and many of his unprincipled partizans were destroyed in a building within the fort which had caught fire. The moment the stronghold fell into Maen's hands he despatched a message to Fermoy requesting the presence of his affianced and her parents at Tara, whither he hastened at once in person to secure the succession. He was recognized at once as Ard-Righ, and in a few days was gladdened by the arrival of his beloved Moria and her parents. The Reign of Maen was distinguished by wisdom and earnest efforts for the well-being of his people.

This hero was also called Labradh Loinseach (Lavra the Sailor), and some ill-judging story-teller related of him what the reader will find in *Legendary Fictions of the Irish Celts* under the title of "The King with the Horse's Ears." But the Gaelic Midas must have been other than our youth.

BAILLE AND AILLINN.

WE could with some little mental exertion, invent time and place, and plausible surroundings, for affording opportunity to the noble Ulster prince, Baillé, the sweet-tongued son of Buan, (son of his own father), and the lovely Leinster princess, Aillinn, daughter of Lucha, to become acquainted, to become deeply in love with each other, and to be separated by some adverse influences. But we edit these ancient tales of our country in good faith, and here acknowledge that the genuine circumstances of their loves and their separation are unknown to us, and that we can only assert with something like truth, that the prince, in his palace at Emania, and the princess in her *grianan* at Dun-Righ, near Leighlin Bridge, found means of despatching trusty messengers to each other, and agreeing to meet at Ros na Righ (see the "Fortunes of King Cormac") for a loving interview.

The ardent and constant Baillé, proceeding on his southern journey, had come as far as the coast by Dundevalgin (Dundalk), when he was startled by the appearance of a tall, uncouth, wild-looking man coming hastily in the opposite direction. "Whence come you?" said the prince, "and whither are you going?" "I am coming," said he, "from Mount Leinster, and proceeding to the Bann, on the bank of which I was born." "And what news bring you," said the prince, "from the far south?" "My news is not pleasant," said he. "The princess Aillinn lately set out from Dun-Righ to meet the Ulster Prince Baillé at the Boyne. An old prophecy declared that they should never meet, and the men of Leinster overtook and detained her. So much was her soul set on the interview that life left within an hour of her detention." On saying these words the weird-looking stranger vanished like a fairy blast. The prince's heart burst with anguish at the news, and he fell dead on the strand. There he was interred with honour, and a yew tree sprang from his grave.

At the same time, as Aillinn was making preparations in her sunny chamber, the same fierce-looking individual presented himself, and repeated a similar story in reference

to her lover—that as he came along, he saw a number of men piling up a cairn, and others inscribing on an upright dallan, how Baillé Mac Buan died on that spot as he was proceeding to meet the fair Aillinn, for fate had decreed that never more in life should they meet. The appearance vanished, and lifeless on the floor fell the constant and tender lady. She was interred amid general lamentation, and from her grave in a short time sprung a beautiful apple-tree. The rest of the tale is given in the words of the lamented Eugene O'Curry.

“At the end of seven years, the poets, and prophets, and seers of Ulster, cut down the yew tree which was over the grave of Baillé, and made it into a *Taball Filidh* or Poet's Tablet, and they wrote, we are told, the ‘Visions, and the Espousals, and the Loves, and the Courtships of Ulster in it.’ The same was also done to the apple tree over the grave of Aillinn, and the ‘Courtships, Loves, etc., of Leinster written in it.’

“Now, a long time afterwards, when Art, the Son of Conn of the Hundred Battles, was Monarch of Erin, A.D. 166, on the occasion of the great periodical feast of *Samhuin* (end of summer—November eve), the poets and professors of all arts came as was the custom, and brought their tablets with them, and among the rest the tablets above mentioned ; and the two tablets were brought to Art, and he had them in his hands, face to face. Suddenly each tablet of them sprang to the other, so that they became bound, as the woodbine to the green twig, and it was found impossible to separate them. And they were thenceforward carefully preserved like the other jewels in the treasury at Tara.”

This melancholy tale is found in the *Book of Leinster*, a compilation of the first half of the twelfth century, made by Finn Mac Gorman, Bishop of Kildare, for Aodh (Hugh) Mac Crimthan, tutor to Dermot Mac Murroch, King of Leinster. It is there, and in a MS. in the British Museum, asserted to have been written by Ailve, daughter of King Cormac (early part of third century). A proof of some weight is afforded by its conclusion that the pagan Irish were acquainted with the use of letters. The Irish letters are named from trees, which afforded the smooth tablets on which the early productions were cut.

The next legend belongs to that ancient class of which modern

fairy-stories are the existing representatives. It is probable that the early tradition of the sons of God (wrongly interpreted as the Angels) intermarrying with the daughters of men, furnished grounds for the later myths of the unions of gods and goddesses with favoured mortals. After the introduction of Christianity, these unedifying myths sunk from one stage to another, and at last terminated in the mere fairy story of the peasant's fireside. The form in which the legend is here presented is that in which it was told by the later pagan or the earlier christian bards.



THE STORY OF FACHTNA.

WHEN Crimhthan Cas was King of Conacht, the people of that province met together at En Loch, in Magh Ai, where they remained that night together. At dawn of day on the morrow they saw a man coming toward them. He had on him a mantle of five colours; two spears of equal size were in his right hand, a shield with a golden rim on his left arm, a gold-hilted sword by his side, and yellow golden hair was falling on his back and shoulders. "Welcome the man that is coming toward you," said Laéré Libhan, the son of Crimthan, "for a youth like him is seldom seen among us." Then said he to the young man, "Protection for the stranger—the agreeable-looking hero." "I am thankful for that," said he. "What brought you here?" "To demand a host." "Who and whence art thou?" said Laéré. "I am one of the *Sliochd Sighe*," said he, "and Fachtna, son of Reatach, is my name, and my wife has been taken forcibly from me by Achy, son of Sal. I went to his hill-fort to give him battle, but he had fled to a brother's son of his—Goll, son of Duilv, the King of Magh Mealh. On this very day we have agreed to meet each other in battle, and to ask assistance I have come hither. I will give an ounce of gold and an ounce of silver to every man that comes with me." Then he turned away, and Laéré said, "It would be a shame to warriors not to assist this Sighe chief."

Then fifty warriors, with Prince Laéré at their head, followed him, and he passed along under the lake, and thus they came to his dun, and there stood Goll, son of Duilv,

with fifty men ready to engage them. Then was fought the sharp, fierce battle between the fifty Sighe champions under Goll, and the fifty Conacht swordsmen of Laéré. When it was ended, the fairy host were lying each on his shield with his face upwards, and life and strength remained with Laéré and his men. "Where is the woman?" said the Prince of Conacht. "In Dun Magh Mealh she is, and the host around her," said Fachtna. "Stay here," said Laéré, "till I and my fifty men return."

He and they marched to Dun Magh Mealh, and out came the defenders of the hill-fort. "That is but of small advantage to you," said Laéré. "We have slain Goll, your prince, and his fifty fair warriors. Deliver up to us the wife of Fachtna, and *slana* (recompense) shall be given to you." This was done. The name of the woman was *Osnadh*, daughter of Achy Amlav. Laéré and his warriors returned, bringing her with them, and when they arrived at the Sighe-fort of Fachtna, Laéré gave her hand into his hand and great was the joy of both. Deargreine, daughter of Fachtna, became the wife of Laéré that night, and fifty fair Sighe women were given to his fifty warriors.

When they had remained there a year, Laéré said, "Let us go forth and see in what state our kindred and our people now are." "If you go," said Fachtna, "let Achy, the father of my wife, accompany you." This was done, and they came and reached the fair assembly. The people of Conacht were at the end of the year, lamenting their lost generous youths on Magh Ai. When they saw them approaching, they pressed them in their arms and besought them not to leave them again. Crimhthan, father of Laéré, was there and he cried to his son, "My son, abandon me not again, and the third of the kingdom shall be thine. Gold and silver cups shall be thine in abundance; steeds, coats of mail, shields, helmets, chess-tables, cloaks, fair women-slaves and stout men." But Laéré said, "We must go; our Sighe wives are lamenting us in the hill-fort. We must return." They embraced with much weeping, but in the end the separated heroes went again under the waves, and so to the dun of Fachtna. They were received with joy and many embraces, and there Laéré and his warriors still

remain with Fachtna, Deargreine, and their other loving partners, the fair Sighe women.



EPISODES OF THE REIGN OF KING CONOR.

CONOR, king of Uladh (Ulster, shortly before the Christian era), was an accomplished, wise, and valiant prince, but not faultless by any means. Indeed, the personages of our old romances are far from presenting us with morally-consistent tableaux. The legendary writers, either from a deep insight into human nature, love of truth, or bluntness of moral perception, have attributed to their heroes a most tantalizing mixture of good and evil qualities.

The beauteous Nessa, mother of Conor, being left a widow, was ardently wooed by Fergus Mac Roigh, the Ulster king; but her love for her son was more powerful than her desire to become Fergus's queen. So she did not give her consent till he granted her son the privilege of reigning one year; but during this term he displayed such intelligence, ability, and energy, that chiefs and people insisted on his permanently retaining his present power.

The ancient kings of Ireland, and even the kings of its separate provinces, observed a custom more advantageous to themselves than to their chiefs. They would pay visits and make progresses through their territories, and on such an occasion Conor and his regal suite found themselves at the house of a hospitable *flaith* named Feilim. It happened that during his stay his host's family was increased by the birth of a daughter. The king's druid, Cathbad, cast the child's horoscope, and prophesied that she should be the cause of trouble and woes both to Conacht and Ulster. The king was advised to put the infant to death, in order to obviate such great national evils, but he would not agree, allaying his own and his advisers' fears by having *Deirdré* (alarm) educated in a remote fortress under the charge of the sage Levarcham, the poetess, who was never to allow a stranger to get access to the stronghold nor its pleasure grounds.

The fate of the Clan Uisneach.

There were at this time at the Court of Ulster three youths, the sons of Uisneach, most remarkable for manly beauty, courage, and skill in arms—Naisi, Ainli, and Ardan. The unwise duenna, not being as closely immured as her fair charge, heard from time to time news of the outer world. So one day when poor Deirdré felt profoundly tired of the quiet and sameness of her abode, she begged Levarcham to tell her a story, and the theme the foolish old woman selected was the bravery, beauty, and nobility of Naisi, son of Uisneach.

The governess paid for her little success by the worrying she suffered at Deirdré's hands for the week ensuing. Night and day she was obliged to be communicative about the training of knights, the vows they made, their lives in peace, in war, and in the council of their king; and at last she frightened her into fits by announcing that she would fling herself from the ramparts unless she became the wife of Naisi.

This hero was reposing on his wolf skin couch in the quarters of the Knights of the Red Branch, in the immediate neighbourhood of Conor's palace at Emania, the ruins of which are still discernible in the neighbourhood of Armagh, when he was startled by the entrance of a young lady, attended by a stout giolla well armed. When she was sure that no inquisitive ear would be the wiser for her communication, she addressed Naisi in these words:—"Naisi, son of Uisneach, the Lady Deirdré, at present confined within a lonely fort, one of the loveliest women of Eiré, and who has never yet laid eyes on knight or peasant, has heard thy praise from the lips of the gifted Levarcham, the composer of a thousand poems. Her life is desolate until she beholds thee; and through me she lays injunctions on thee as true *curadh* of the Red Branch, that thou release her from her thralldom, and make her thy wife." "Tell theauteous Deirdré," answered Naisi, "that I kiss the ground touched by her sandals, and, though death stand before me, I go to gather my friends. She shall shortly be borne away far from the pursuit of Conor, or see my lifeless

body at the gates of her prison. Haste, fair maiden, to your lady. I possess but half life till I hold her white hand in my own."

Seven days after this interview, Naisi, Ainli, and Ardan, accompanied by Deirdré, and their attendants and armed followers, amounting to about a hundred and fifty, were far from Emania. Dreading to remain within the four seas of Ireland, they soon crossed the narrow strait between Erinn and Alba to escape the pursuit of Conor's bands.

Great was at first the bliss of the freed lady, but she soon began to feel for the privations, and alarms, and dangers encountered for her safety by her lord and his faithful brothers. The fame of her great beauty and singular fortune soon attracted the notice of those chiefs in whose possessions they sought refuge, and they enjoyed no more comfort or hope of rest than the hunted deer, till at last their friends at Emania seemingly obtained their pardon from the offended king, and they were invited to return.

The happy restoration of the fugitives was far from the mind of Conor. However, Fergus, the ex-king, and his own natural son, Cormac, were despatched to the retreat of the Clann Uisneach with assurances of the king's forgiveness, and invitations to return to Uladh.

The brothers received Fergus with cordial welcome, and his message with joy; but Deirdré's mind was far from being at ease. She felt that Conor would obtain possession of her if possible, and dreaded for the lives of her husband and his brothers.

As their barques were nearing the coast of Uladh, she bade a sorrowful farewell to the isles of Alba, where she had enjoyed so much happiness. Here are a few of the verses literally translated.

"Dear to me is that land to the east—
Alba full of delights!
Never would I have quitted it,
But that I have come with Naisi.

"Gleneiche, Gleneiche!
There was our first bothy raised.
Smiling are the woods when the rising sun
Strikes Gleneiche with his rays.

*all Naisi's
lover 78*

“ Glendarua, glen of the two roes,
My love to every one of its dwellers.
Sweet were the cuckoo’s notes on the bending boughs,
On the cliff that hung over Glendarua.

“ Pleasant was Drayno of the sounding shore ;
Pleasant were your streams of clear sand !
Never would I have quitted that shore
Only that I come with my love.”

When they reached the shore of Erinn, and under the guard of Fergus and his son Fiacha were proceeding to Emania, the giolla of Barach, an intimate friend of Fergus, presented himself before him with an injunction from his master to come to him at the moment, and enjoy his hospitality for three days. This request he was obliged to comply with, from an old compact between himself and his brother chiefs.

This scheme had been laid out by Conor in order to deprive the exiles of the protection of the noble and influential Fergus. He turned with a heavy heart to his two sons, Fair Illan and Red Buini the Fierce, and said—“ I must give up my charge, but I enjoin you both to secure the safety of the Clann Uisneach, even at the expense of your heart’s blood ! ”

When Fergus had quitted them, Deirdré spoke. “ My advice,” said she, “ which I fear you will not follow, is to retire to Rachlin isle, and there abide till the three days of Fergus’s feast have expired.” But Naisi, Ainli, and Ardan, were too confident in their strength, and Illan and Buini in their father’s influence, to be capable of fear.

After this they came to Ardsalach (Hill of Willows), and then Deirdré said to Naisi—“ I see a cloud in the sky, and it is a cloud of blood, and I would give you good advice, O children of Uisneach ! ” “ What advice is that ? ” says Naisi. “ To go to Dundalgan (Dundalk), where Cuchulainn is, till Fergus partake of the feast, and to be under the safeguard of Cuchulainn for fear of the treachery of Conor.” “ Since fear is not upon us we will not practise that advice,” says Naisi.

They were approaching Emania, and Deirdré again said—“ If we are admitted into Conor’s own hall, where his

nobles are at the feast, he intends all honour by us. If we are sent to the house of the Red Branch, destruction and the end of life will come upon us." "Fear not!" said Naisi. They approached the door, and struck it with the hand-wood, and the door-keeper learned their names, and acquainted Conor. "What entertainment," said he, "is ready at the Red Branch house?" "As much," was the reply, "as would satisfy the seven battalions of Uladh." "Then let the guests be conducted there," said he.

Deirdré, on this being heard, repeated her warning; but her warning was not regarded, and all were soon employed satisfying hunger and thirst.

Conor was heated with food and wine, and he sent Le-varcham to see how looked the sons of Uisneach and the bride of Naisi. She found him and his bride playing with the *polished cabinet* (chess-board) between them. She bestowed kisses and tears on them, and returned to the king. "What news?" said he. "Glad and sorrowful," said she. "The sons of Uisneach are the foremost in the world for strength, comeliness, and valour, and will be pillars of your kingdom, but the beauty and the grace of Deirdré when she left Emania remain not on her."

This quieted Conor for some time; but he drank more wine, and asked would anyone go and bring him word if Deirdré's beauty and grace had remained on her?

No one moved; but Trendorn the Spiteful, whose father had been slain fighting against Clann Uisneach, arose and hied to the house of the Red Branch. All doors and windows he found closed and barred; but through one small window, forgotten till then, he looked, and above all loveliness in the world seemed the beauty of Deirdré. "A man of evil eye is spying us through that window," said Deirdré. The words were scarcely uttered, when that eye was driven from his head by a chess-man flung from the hand of Naisi.

"What news do you bring?" was asked by Conor, of the wounded man.

"More than good," he answered. "Noble son of Nessa! within the four seas of Erin, or within the three divisions

of the world, there lives not a more beautiful woman than the wife of Naisi."

The hall re-echoed the shouts of the king as he ordered his warriors to assail the stronghold of the children of Uisneach. The children of Fergus took on themselves the post of danger; and while the children of Uisneach and Deirdré were engaged at the chess-board, forth went Buini Borb and slew many of the fighting men of Uladh.

Conor asked who made that great havoc of the troops.

"It's myself, Buini the Fierce, son of Fergus," said he.

"A bribe from me to you," said Conor.

"What is that bribe?" said Buini.

"A district of land, with my privacy and counsel."

"I will take that," said Buini Borb.

Buini's land became a moor that very night.

The wrathful Illan Finn, furious at his brother's treachery, now rushed forth, and great as was the slaughter made by Buini the Fierce, it was nothing to what he made. Then spoke Conor to his son Fiachra, and bade him take his own arms, the *Ocean*, the *Victorious*, the *Cast*, and the *Blue-Green Blade* (shield, two javelins, and sword), and do battle with Illan Finn.

"Warlike, bloody, desperate, forceful, inimical, stout, mighty, violent, and reckless, was the fight that ensued, till Illan forced Fiachra to crouch beneath the shade of his shield, the *Ocean*, which fatally roared. . . For it was fatal for the shield of Conor to roar at the danger of the person on whom it would be, and the three principal waves of Erin—namely the wave of Toth, the wave of Cliona, and the wave of Rory, roared responsive to it."

Conall Carnach, hearing the roar of the wave of Toth, knew that Conor or a child of his was in peril, and came speedily to the battle ground. He saw the danger of the prince, but without taking time for thought, thrust his sword through the heart of Illan Finn, the loyal and generous. "Dreadful is the deed!" said the dying man, "and the sons of Uisneach under my protection." "By my hand of valour," said Conall, "Conor shall not bear his son alive from me in vengeance for that deed;" and he smote the

head of Fiachra from his body, and went away in deep sorrow.

Illan, on the point of death, flung his arms of valour into the house, and cried to the sons of Uisneach to defend themselves. Out sprung the active, strong, and fierce brothers, and cut, and hewed, and scattered their foes like weak straw. Then did Conor cry to Cathbad the druid, "Fling your spells and your enchantments over the sons of Uisneach, or there will not be a man of Uladh without the bitterness of death and the end of life brought on him." "Give me your kingly word," said he, "that you will not inflict death on them, but make them again your faithful followers." He gave that promise; and then did Cathbad bring over them a sea of weakness and heaviness. Down they sunk, and their red arms fell from their hands.

Conor, forgetful of his promise, called out to his warriors one after another, to put them to death. But of that mighty array not a man would stretch forth his hand to do the accursed deed. At last came forward Mainé Lavgarv, and he was the King of Norway's son. With his sharp sword he severed the heads from the three fair bodies, and three deep groans went up from the breasts of the men of Uladh. Their grave was made and their noble bodies laid within. The unhappy Deirdré, no longer hearing the clash of arms, came forth, and at the sight of the lifeless remains of those so dear to her, shrieked and uttered wild lamentations. A few verses of her sorrowful song are here given in a literal translation.

"Long is the day without the sons of Uisneach,
Not sorrowful (to me was) their society,
Sons of a king by whom strangers were entertained,
Three lions on the hills of Emania.

"Thee I have rejected, O King of Uladh,
For the sake of my loved Naisi ;
Short are my days after him ;
Let me now sing his sad caoine !

"Their three shields and their three spears
Many times have been my bed ;
Set their three hard blades
Over their grave, O giolla.

“ Their three hounds and their three falcons
Shall from this time be without prey ;
Three sustainers of every conflict,
The three pupils of Conall Carnach.

“ I forsook the delights of Uladh
For the three much-loved heroes ;
My life will not be long ;
Lonely am I left after them.

“ Here I stand bereft of joy,
The end of life is on me ;
To survive them would be woe ;
Here no longer shall I be.”

She flung herself on the bodies of her beloved. Her life passed away, and a share of their graves was hers.

Fergus returned from the house of his deceitful friend, Barach. Learning the facts related, he was beside himself with rage and grief. He and Cormac, son of Conor, and a champion named Duthach, collected warriors, and stormed the stronghold of Emania. Scarcely was a single inmate left alive ; but Conor, being on a remote excursion at the time, escaped. These determined foemen then betook themselves and their forces to the court of Maev, Queen of Conacht. For the space of seven years they ravaged the borders of Ulster ; they drove away the cattle, and killed all the champions sent to oppose them. The district of *Cuailgne* (Louth) suffered particularly from their inroads. On one occasion the warriors of Uladh, being all rendered powerless by the spells of the children of the Firbolg, Cuchulainn, effectually defended the passes against the Conacht forces, though Queen Maev was present in her golden chariot, to witness, animate, and reward their bravery.

The Youth of Cuchulainn.

This celebrated chief just named, nephew of Conor, quitted his father's house of Dundalgan at an early age to learn the full knowledge of arms, and of the behaviour of a *curadh*. His boyish name was Setanta, and Sualtain was the name that was on his father. In this manner he got the name of Cuchulainn. Culann the smith invited Conor and some of his knights to spend a night and day at his

house; and when he was closing his gates and his doors for the night, he asked the king if he expected any more of his people to come after him that evening. "I do not," said Conor. "Then shall I let my house-dog loose," said Culann. Setanta, however, followed his uncle, and was set on by the furious animal. Severe was the fight that took place, but in the end Setanta had his life in safety, and the dead animal was at his feet. The smith and his guests were just then before him, for they were brought out by the cries of the animal. "What eric am I to receive for the loss of my guardian house-man?" said the smith; "I slept in security while he was alive, and only a weak young pup of his breed exists." Let the boy himself appoint the eric," said Conor. "I am satisfied with that," said Culann. "My award," said Setanta, "is, that I watch your house, and your forges, and your cattle, till the pup comes to his full growth." "That is a just award," said the smith; and thus Setanta got the name of *Cuchulainn* (Culann's dog).

When Cuchulainn became a man he wooed the Lady Eimer of Lusk; but Forgall, her father, said he was not yet perfect in the science of war, and laid injunctions on him to repair to the warlike lady, Scathach, in the distant Isle of Skye. Thither sailed the young warrior with Feardia, a Conacht youth, and thus they found their instructress:—She was sitting in a high thick-branched tree, and her opening lesson came to them in the shape of javelins, sharp rocks, and other missiles, which she flung on their heads. Cuchulainn, however, succeeded in gaining the very bough on which his tutoress was perched, and she, who only meant all in kindness, would have fallen on his neck but for fear of a tumble. She invited him and his comrade to a good breakfast in a neighbouring island, where her court of martial exercises was situate. The three arrived at the narrow strait which separated them from this island, but the pupils saw no means of crossing but a thin curved rim of iron. Scathach passed that strange bridge without pause; Cuchulainn would have preferred springing across, making use of his long spear as a leaping-pole, but he was ignorant of the depth of the water. He tried the bridge of fear, and arrived at the middle of the farther descent. No untrained

mortal could do more ; he went headlong into the deep, but quickly rejoined his admiring mistress, who soon rewarded the exertions of her new pupils by a good breakfast of venison and oat-cakes, relished by diluted mead.

When Scathach considered the education of her pupils accomplished, she subjected Cuchulainn to this trial. She stood on the centre of a thin, level bar of iron, raised some dozen feet above the ground, and directed him to walk from one end to the other, without disturbing her or displacing a fold of her garment. It was only a pleasant promenade to her pupil. Having come pretty nigh to the lady, he dropped to his full length, seizing the bar with his left hand ; then catching it on the other side with the right, he sprang upwards, and lighting with his feet firmly planted on the narrow support, he leisurely walked to the end, and descending to the ground, he presented his hand to the well-pleased Scathach, who, touching his fingers, bounded lightly to the earth. The sorrow of the separation was very great.

Alas ! Cuchulainn left a lonely wife behind him on his return to Uladh. This was Eve, daughter of Scathach. A son was born ; he was named Conloch : and when he came to man's estate, and had taken lessons from his grandmother, he was sent to Erin, to the Court of Emania, and charged not to reveal his name nor parentage to the best in the land. He was entertained suitably to his appearance and manners ; but when asked, on the third day after his arrival, concerning name and lineage, he refused to reveal either. The result was, that he stood foot to foot in mortal strife against a score of Ulster knights in succession, and slew or disabled the whole.

In this strait Cuchulainn himself met his own son in the lists, and, despite his skill and force, he was worsted, and on the point of being slain. In this extremity he cried out to his attendant, the trusty Laegh, to fling him the *Ga-Bolg* (body javelin), whose stroke was always fatal. The unfortunate youth was rolling on the sand a few moments after, sped by the enchanted weapon ; but before he expired he was recognised by his wretched father. When he received his death-wound, the by-standers loosed his lorica, and

underneath was seen an amulet, which Cuchulainn recognised as once worn by his deserted wife. The unfortunate parent was for a time deprived of reason.

The Cattle Spoil of Cuailgne.

Cuchulainn is now defending his province against the Conacht invaders; and, woe the while! Feardia is foremost amongst the foes of Conor.

Let us see what roused the flames of warfare at this time between the two provinces.

Maev, the beautiful, the commanding, the courageous, but, alas! the unchaste, swayed at this time, conjointly with her husband, Ailill Mór, the sceptre of the West at Cruachan. She had had two husbands before the present, the first of whom was Conor of Uladh. Like the wives of other kings and chiefs of Erin, she possessed separate property, and one morning, as she was lovingly conversing with her husband in her *Grianan*, the discourse fell on the comparative value of their goods. They reckoned cattle, jewels, arms, cloaks, chess-boards, chess-men, war-chariots, male and female slaves, and, most provoking! they found their possessions equal in number and value. At last Ailill recollected the famous bull, *Finnbeanach* (white-horned), which, after having ruled Maev's herds for a while, left them in disgust, as being the property of a woman, and joined the cattle of Ailill.

Much chagrin was the portion of Maev, till she recollected that Daré of Fachtna, in Cuailgne, possessed a brown bull, the finest beast in Erin. To him she sent a deputation, requesting the loan of the *Donn Cuailgne* (the Brown One of Cooley). "Her gratitude would be great, and he should be returned within a year, with fifty heifers, a chariot worth sixty-three cows, and other valuable tokens of her gratitude and esteem."

Daré was only too happy to oblige the great queen; but at the evening entertainment, an ill-bred guest boasted that they would have taken Donn by force if they had got a refusal. This so annoyed the hospitable master, that he dismissed the embassy next day; but no bull, white or brown, went with it to Cruachan. The enraged queen at once

summoned her native forces, and invited Fergus, son of Roigh, and Cormac, son of Conor, to join her with their available followers. This they did—but unwillingly—and the troops set forward, Maev accompanying them in her chariot—a lady of large size, fair face, and yellow hair, a curiously carved spear in her hand, and her crimson cloak fastened by a golden brooch.

Alas for the Ultonians! Formerly in a fit of drunkenness they had invaded the kingdom of Kerry, slain Conri, son of Dairé, defenceless on his hearth-stone, and did much unprovoked damage. And now for this, or some other large crime, all the men of Uladh are suffering the punishment of feebleness, and can neither hold shield nor throw lance.

But when Maev, at the head of her exulting troops, approached the fords which gave access to the territory of Daré, there stood Cuchulainn. He demanded single combat from the best warriors of her army, laying injunctions on them not to pass the ford until he is overcome. The spirit and usages of the people put it out of her power to refuse, and there, day after day, were severe conflicts waged between the single champion of Uladh and the best warriors advancing in succession from the army of Maev.

While the "Guardian hound of Ulster" is thus sending to Tir na n-Oge, every knight, Conacht or confederate, sent to attack him, Maev the magnificent sits downcast in mind in her golden chariot. The case is desperate, and she summons Feardia to her presence. Hitherto he has resisted every demand, every blandishment of his sovereign. "He enter into deadly strife with his fellow-student—the pupil of his venerated Scathach! No! He would not even pluck one hair from the long thick honours of his head for all the cows in Cuailne, with the charmed bull at their head!" But now the peace of his queen, the safety of his allies, his own reputation, is at stake. He quits the side of the chariot, leaving a smile of satisfaction on the still fascinating countenance of its mistress, dons his armour, grasps shield and spear, and confronts the terrible warrior. Cuchulainn drops his arms, lifts his hands in wonder and grief, and bitterly reproaches his former fellow-student for thus

breaking the strong tie of brotherhood that had kept their hearts united so long. Feardia, with the tears wetting the manly crommeal that shaded his upper lip, made the best apology he could devise, and after a world of regret and complaint on either side, they parted, appointing the commencement of the strife for next morning.

The first day's business was a mere courteous exhibition. They flung javelins and small bucklers, sharp in the rim, at each other from morn to eve ; then their squires prepared their meal, which they partook of at the same table ; and when the hour of rest arrived, they lay down side by side on the same skins. About the end of the third day, there began to come out more earnestness and less courtesy : the squires ceased using the same fire for cooking—the knights slept apart. Soon, there was need of salves and styptics for serious flesh wounds. On the ninth day, Cuchulainn's life was imperilled in the terrible struggle ; and on the tenth, being driven into the centre of the river, and roused to fury by such humiliation, he shouted to his squire, Laegh, to throw him the terrible ga-bolg. Feardia, apprehensive of this proceeding on the part of his adversary, had that morning girt over his ordinary body armour, a round plate of flint ; but flint, bronze, and tough bull-hide were of light avail before the charmed javelin that now was flashing with the speed of lightning from the hand of the desperate warrior. It tore and mangled the seven-fold defences of his undaunted heart ; and his powerful and graceful frame was soon only a lifeless mass floating down the river. It was soon grasped and brought to land, and receiving the useless honours of the dead from faithful squire and the distracted slayer. For many a day he never touched shield nor spear, and his ears were deaf to the cries of his people, bewailing the plunder of the cattle and their own perils. . . .

The "Brown One" was captured, and driven before the army of Maev. But the appointed time of the spell being past, the men of Uladh, under their king, thronged southward, and overtook the despoilers. Cuchulainn was unable to fight. He was laid in his war chariot, and his trusty driver, Laegh, described to him the various fates of the heavy fight, and dresses of the warriors. Throughout the *Tain*

we are treated to a profusion of red or yellow hair on the warriors' heads, yellow silk shirts, mantles held by rich brooches, and finely wrought shields on their arms. The hero of Dundalgan could not forbear approaching the struggling hosts, and meeting with Fergus he adjured him to withdraw from the battle. He was obeyed, and the Conacht forces soon followed his example—still taking care to drive the *Donn Cuailgne* before them.

This wonderful animal, finding himself among strange pastures, gave vent to his wonder and vexation in a series of mighty bellows, which brought the *Finnbeanach* on the scene at once. What combat of armed warriors could be even a shadow of the mighty conflict that ensued, made more terrible by the unearthly roars of the rivals? At last *Donn*, having slain his foe, took him on his horns, walked contemptuously past the Rath of Cruachan, dropped his loins at the ford, since called Athlone (*Ath luain*, ford of the loin) and other parts at other localities, made his way to Cuailgne, frightened the inhabitants, and finally charging at the face of a rock behind which they had sheltered, was killed with the shock.

The Cloch Milidh of Mesgera.

In the *Legendary Fictions of the Irish Celts*, is related the death of Mesgera, King of Leinster, by the hands of Conall Carnach, and the composition of a ball by this rough warrior, out of lime and the brains of the unfortunate king. From the savage circumstances attending the fabrication of this *cloch milidh* (hero's stone), the druid Cathbad prophesied that it would prove fatal to Uladh. It was preserved carefully in the magazine belonging to the companions of the Red Branch.

The contention between Uladh and Conacht did not cease with the battle just described. Keat, one of the most daring of Maev's partisans, even ventured in disguise to Emania for the purpose of securing the famous ball, or doing Conor some signal injury; and chance favoured him beyond his expectations. Two fools who frequented the palace had found the ball in their purposeless explorations through the armoury, and were amusing themselves at the

arrival of Keat in tossing it from one to the other in an open space outside the ramparts. He found no difficulty in getting leave to join the sport, and gradually lengthened the distance between the fortress and his company. At last, giving the ball a mighty fling, it fell in a place rough with rocks and bushes, and he conveyed it away under his cloak while his play-fellows were eagerly searching for it in the neighbourhood. The fools, entertaining no suspicion of the theft, continued their search, while Keat was speeding homewards with his much-valued spoil.

The loss of the magic weapon was soon spread abroad, and coming to the ears of the king he hastened the preparations of a foray which he had lately determined on. He crossed the Shannon, and found a strong body moving forward to dispute his further progress.

The great ladies of Conacht, hearing of the approach of the renowned King of Uladh, were all seized with a desire to see and speak to a knight so famed for gallantry, beauty of person, and princely accomplishments. So they assembled on a hill that lay between the two armies, and despatched one of their number, attended by a herald, to request him to honour their assembly with his presence on the next day, pledging their words as true women that he should come and go in perfect safety. Conor returned courteous greeting to the ladies, and the next day delighted their eyes as he approached the hill unarmed, and with head uncovered, except by his long curling hair.

Two hours went by before the entertainers or entertained could fancy that five minutes had elapsed; and while the ladies were under the full influence of the noble and graceful carriage of the king, his manly beauty, his courtesy and witching conversation, they could not credit the report of his treachery to the children of Uisneach.

Keat had ever present to his mind the prophecy connected with Mesgera's ball, and now, while the fair women standing round the stately king hung with rapture on his gestures, the play of his features, and the fascinating words that came from his lips, the treacherous chief was seen issuing from behind a clump of furze bushes, and making

towards the group with the fatal weapon grasped in his strong right hand.

It is said that when an Irishwoman finds her husband, brother, or lover, engaged with fist or stick against a member of a hostile faction, she instinctively flings her fair arms round the dear one by way of ægis. If such be the case, the result is seldom in harmony with the intention, as the foe thus gets an opportunity of administering an unwelcome stroke. I advise my countrywomen rather to imitate, on such occasions, the plan adopted by their great grandmothers who were contemporary with Conor.

The fearless king was well aware of the fatal qualities of the ball ; and, being unarmed, determined to trust for his safety to his fleet limbs. "Excuse my sudden departure, noble ladies," said he, "the odds between myself and you traitor are too much, unarmed as I am." He was down the slope with the speed of a wild deer ; and while Keat was on the point of launching the fatal ball, he was surrounded and entangled by mantles and scarfs, and the arms of their beauteous wearers.

But he was not long detained, however strong and fascinating the ties flung around him—ties which only one in three hundred and sixty-five of his race would have moral strength to snap asunder. At the moment of his release, he saw his intended victim speeding like the wind about three hundred yards in advance, and he bounded on in pursuit, shouting so fearfully that the ladies on the hill fled shrieking, or sunk senseless on the turf, and the wild game ran terrified in every direction from the hill. The yell only added fleetness to the limbs of Conor ; and let Keat exert himself as he might, he found to his chagrin and wrath, that the distance between himself and his game was not diminishing by a single fathom. They had dashed through thickets, across streams, up and down hills, for a distance of about three miles ; and now, as the pursuer gained the summit of a rising ground, he had before him, on the ridge of the next eminence, the main body of the Ulster army, and their king about half way between himself and the stream that sparkled through the valley. The Ulster chief was recognized by his people ; the shouts of

the northern warriors pierced the clouds, and many a swift foot was in full career, till Conor, having reached the river's side, was clearing it at a flying leap. Keat now slackening his speed for the better direction of his cast, let fly the fatal missile as the pace of his foe was for the moment relaxed on gaining the further bank. Such was the force with which it was launched, that, striking his undefended head even at that long distance, it broke his skull, and the next moment he was lying senseless on the turf. So great was the anxiety for their monarch, that but few pursued the homicide, and these were soon thrown out by the unflagging powers of the Conacht champion.

However, he did not long enjoy the profit or honour of his exploit, for he soon after perished by the hand of the great Conall Carnach, in a raid which he conducted into Ulster. But for the circumstances of his death, and the treatment of the wounded Ulster knight by Bealchu Breifne, and the subsequent slaying of this Conacht champion, see the *Lays of the Western Gael*, by Samuel Ferguson, Esq., M.R.I.A. His account slightly differs from that by earlier bards, but is infinitely superior in invention, and fitness, and poetic skill. Among the same lays will be found "The Lamentation of Deirdre" for the loss of her husband and his brothers, adapted to the ancient melody preserved in Bunting's collection, and imbued with the wildness and intense melancholy of an Irish caoine. It approaches the Gaelic idiom as nearly as could be permitted to English verse, and may be said to be unique among the productions of modern Irish poets. We heartily recommend our readers to study these lays till they have them literally by heart; but we are not at all inclined to urge them to the perusal of *The Story of the Irish before the Conquest*, by M. C. Ferguson (a lady we presume), for alas! our efforts in this volume would appear colourless and vapid beside the racy and charmingly-told stories which compose that collection.

But we must resume our story.

The Death of Conor.

Amid the lamentations of his faithful chiefs, the skilful physician Finaan hastened to the couch of the insensible

king, and examined the condition of the wound. He found the membrane that enclosed the brain still uninjured, and by skill and care he restored his sovereign to health again, but not to the possession of that vigorous life he once enjoyed. He particularly charged his patient to avoid excitement.

So Conor, avoiding absorbing passions of every kind, employed a great part of his time in calm study and self-examination, and was brought to a sincere sorrow for his ungenerous and cruel treatment of the sons of Uisneach. Seven years after Keat's attempt on his life, as he was conferring with his good and wise druid on a fine day in spring, while walking in a wood in the neighbourhood of his palace, he was amazed at seeing his sage friend stop short in his discourse, fling his arms wildly over his head, tear his long white hair, and utter lamentable cries. The king implored him to cease these frantic manifestations and explain the cause; and as soon as he could recover utterance he spoke thus—"Oh, my king," said he, while he stood upright and fixedly gazed on the distant horizon, "I see at this moment across woods, plains, seas, and their rocky shores, a mound where thousands of cruel wretches are gazing with cold curiosity on a bleeding naked figure, whose head is pierced with the prickles of a thorny wreath, and whose weight is supported by rough nails driven through the tender nerves and muscles of his delicate hands and feet! Oh! the superhuman beauty, the compassion, and the love, of that majestic though agonized face, as it is bent in pity towards a divine spirit in woman's shape, and directs her attention to a beardless youth, with a countenance bearing the stamp of innocence, and love, and intense grief! I see the movement of their lips, I see the expression of their features, and the angry gestures of the armed wretches round them; but no sound of spoken words come to my ears. Oh! that I were on that rock, and could be blessed with the sight of the lions of Uladh, Conor the magnificent, Cuchulainn, Conall Carnach, Lara Buach, Naisi, Ainli, and Ardan, rushing with their sharp blazing swords on these hell-hounds, and scattering them like chaff before the blasts of the north wind!" But

here the enthusiasm of the inspired druid became blended with terror, for Conor, whose attention had so keenly followed his words and gestures that the scene was vividly present to his mind, drew his heavy sword from its scabbard, and striking with fury at the young trees within his reach, continued to shout, "Ah, ye murderers ! receive the reward of your cruelty ! Unfeeling ruffians, I will teach you to feel for your wicked selves ! Oh ! DIVINE BEING, whoever thou art, look on me with favour !" But the excitement was too intense ; the working of the maddened brain burst its envelope ; the sword dropped from his relaxed grasp, and he fell lifeless on the long waving grass. Let us hope that his spirit went on a different route to that taken by the wicked Romans and Jews who surrounded the Mount of Calvary on that day !

' We cannot forbear quoting a few lines from Mr. Ferguson's " Ab-dication of Fergus Mac Roy " in favour of the young Conor. The adventurous and pleasure-loving monarch had neither the skill nor the patience to study the tangled causes which he was continually called on to decide. One day, being more anxious to go to the chase than to examine a tough suit, he assigned the hearing of it to his young step-son, who, as M. Thiers would say, was found equal to the occasion.

" Conor, with unaltered mien,
In a clear, sweet voice serene,
Took in hand the tangled skein,
And began to make it plain.

" As a sheep-dog sorts his cattle,
As a king arrays his battle,
So the facts on either side
He did marshal and divide.

" Every branching side-dispute
He traced downward to the root
Of the strife's main stem, and there
Laid the ground of difference bare.

" Then to scope of either cause
Set the compass of the laws,—
This adopting, that rejecting,
Reasons to a head collecting.

- “ As a charging cohort goes
Through and over scattered foes,
So from point to point he brought,
Onward still, the weight of thought,
- “ Through all error and confusion
Till he set the clear conclusion
Standing like a king alone,
All things adverse overthrown,
- “ And gave judgment clear and sound.
Praises filled the hall around ;
Yea, the man that lost the cause,
Hardly could withhold applause.”

Fergus's mortification at his own deficiency, and probably a sense of what was due to his subjects, were so strong that he placed his golden circlet on the head of the young ollav, and resigned to him his honours and troubles. We quote another reason assigned as the cause of the prostration of the Ulster men. One of their chiefs, in the excitement of a gambling contest, obliged his wife to contend in a race against a fleet steed of his opponent. The poor lady was near her confinement at the time, yet she came first to the goal. In her subsequent pangs she uttered her maledictions on the men of Uladh, and they had the terrible effect described. This legend is found among the *Lays of the Western Gael*. In *Evenings in the Duffrey* is related the rivalry of Conor's great champion, Cuchulainn, with Conri, son of Dairé.



THE ENCHANTMENT OF CUCHULAINN.

THIS mythic hero was once bewitched by a pair of women of the *Sliochd Sighe*. They appeared on a lake adjoining his palace in the plain of Louth, as two beautiful swans yoked to each other by a golden chain ; and he was so ill-advised as to direct his charioteer, Lae, to assail them with sling and spear. They could not be struck, and the disappointed champion went away sadly, set his back against a rock, and a druidic sleep fell on him. While under its influence, two women—one with a green, and the other with a red cloak—approached, treacherously smiled on him, and then chastised him with horse-switches till he was nearly dead.

So the warrior lay on his bed in a state of lethargy for a long year ; and at its close, as Fergus was sitting between him and the wall, Conall Carnach between him and the

door, Lucha holding him up (in the original "between him and the pillow"), a person appeared before the company and ordered the sick man to go to the same rock where he had been enchanted, and it would be well with him. On arriving there he was accosted by one of his fair executioners, who explained that all had been done in love and kindness; that the beautiful princess Fand, who had been deserted by Mananan Mac Lir, had conceived a violent affection for him, and would have him come to her in the beautiful island of the Sighé.

So to this fairy island, Inis Labraidh, Cuchulainn was borne, and there he lived forgetful of his chaste and loyal wife, the fair Eimer. However, this last-named lady was not resigned to her bereavement. She heard that the fairy princess and her infatuated mortal lover were entertaining themselves over their wine-cups and chess-board at *IbarCian Trachta* (Newry), and thither she came with fifty of her ladies, each provided with a deadly skian, to slay Fand, or send her back alone to Inis Labraidh (pr. *Lavray*). Before using the weapons, however, she appealed to the good feelings of the woman in power; and strange to tell, so wrought on her that she renounced the faithless husband, and was in some degree recompensed by the sight of her deathless lover—Mananan coming invisible to the mortal eyes present, to bear her away in his resplendent chariot.

Cuchulainn was as furious at his loss as ever Achilles when he lay in his galley, and bewailed Briseis. The poets and druids of Conor's court surrounded him, and after some attempts on his part to kill a few of them, they strengthened their spells and laid hold on his arms and legs. This appeared to be the essential portion of the charm: he became powerless and asked for a drink. They reached him the goblet of oblivion, and when he took it from his mouth, he had no more recollection of Fand than if he had never seen or heard of her. Eimer then put the chalice to her lips, and all memory of Cuchulainn's falsehood disappeared from her mind.

This is one of the Gaelic legends, translated from the original by the lamented scholar Eugene O'Curry and published in *The Atlantis*. We have merely given the outline.

THE YOUTH OF MORAN THE JUST.

IN the early part of the first century of the Christian era, occurred an insurrection of the lower orders, one of the most wonderful on record, for it had been preparing for three years, and no traitor was found to denounce the conspiracy to the higher powers.

Every one of the Milesian colony was considered from the beginning as a *Duiné Uasal* (gentleman) at least. He condescended to nothing lower than brehon, military chief, or physician. The Danaans, the conquered race, and the Firbolgs whom they had conquered a couple of centuries before, were either farmers paying rent for their land, or serfs, or dealers. Some of the dominant race had by misfortune, or mismanagement, or extravagance, lost their hereditary lands and their rank; and those who still held their ground as petty kings or chiefs, were addicted to a life of warfare, and hunting, and feasting at their own or their neighbours' duns, and the weight of duties and taxes in labour and cattle on their dependants was very great. So, during the reign of Fiacha we find the degraded Milesians, and the Firbolgs, and the Danaans, concerting for three years the destruction of the kings and chiefs of the land, and no one sufficiently loyal or mercenary to reveal the plot. By the end of the time quoted they had made a large provision of eatables and drinkables, and a general invitation was given to kings and chiefs, the great of the land, to come and partake of the feast, which their devoted tenants and serfs had prepared for them.

The place of entertainment was the plain since called *Magh Cru* (Field of Blood) near Cnoc Mai (Knockmoy) in Galway. Thither came without suspicion every rank of nobility, king, and flaith—and while the mead, and the wine, and the beer were draining, and the fileas reciting in flowing verse to the sound of their clarsechs the deeds of the ancestors of the guests, the farmers who sat at the lower ends of the tables, and the attendants who served were waiting for the sound of a loud bugle, on the first blast of which, all drawing sharp skians from under their tunics, and falling on the unsuspecting and partly intoxicated

guests—royal and noble—slew them to a man. The wives of three of the kings, foreign princesses, made their escape to Alba, and there they brought to the world three sons fated to continue the Royal Scotie line. These princes were Cairbre, Tibrae Tireach, and Feradach the Righteous.

The commons who executed this cruel deed were the *Aitheach Tuatha* (rent-paying people); in the chronicles of Alba and Britain they are designated the Attacots. They immediately elected for their sovereign Cairbre, of Scandinavian descent, who from the shape of his ears and the general expression of his features was surnamed *Ceann Cait* (Cat-head). Anarchy prevailed through his entire reign of five years, and sterility was felt through the land; the wheat ear produced but one grain, and the oak but one acorn.

Cairbre had done a heinous deed, his heart was bad, and, among other punishments, every child borne to him by his wife, a woman of noble birth, was marked by some unsightly defect. He held consultation with his queen, and this is the council she gave him:—"Call a feis (council) of flaiths, of ollamhs, and of the priests of the gods, and let them join in prayer and supplication to the unseen powers, that children without blemish may be granted to us." It was done, and the great assembly joined in supplications and fasts, and did not separate for three months. But when again a son was born to Cairbre, all of him that was above his shoulders was an unvaried mass—no eyes, no nose, no mouth. "Great was the influence of the feis of thy flaiths, and thy ollamhs, O Cairbre," said the sorrowful mother, "but it was for evil and not for good it prevailed. I have borne a *Maen* (mute), and the most hateful of my offspring." "Let him be taken," said Cairbre to his steward, "and flung into the pool."

But before that could be done a *Fear Sighe* (man fairy) appeared to the queen, and said; "It is to the sea that the child is to be taken, and held therein till nine waves pass over his head. Thenceforth shall his name not be Maen but *Morain* (Mor Fionn) for his glory shall exceed that of kings." The steward was called by the queen, and direct-

ed according to the words of the dweller in the sighe mound ; and when the ninth wave had passed over the shapeless child, the membrane parted, revealed the head and features of a fine boy, and falling on his shoulders, encircled his neck as a band. Thereupon he sang a lay, and said :—

“ Worship God, ye peoples on the firm world,
With whom is contentment, with joy, with my forgiving God,
Who created the heavenly bodies.”

The steward feared the wrath of Cairbre when he would find he had not been obeyed, and therefore he brought up the boy unknown to his parents. During the five miserable years that Cairbre reigned, there was wickedness on the land, and barrenness in the land, and the summer was not distinguished from the winter except by the leaves of the trees. At last he died, and the steward brought the young Moran before the flaiths and the ollamhs, and they, looking on the truthful countenance of the youth, and hearing his words of sweetness and power, would have elected him king at once: “ Not so,” said he, “ I am the son of an usurper, and while the son or the son’s son of my father sat at Teamur, desolation would cover the land. Let Feradach the Righteous, the son of Crimthan, and the rightful Ard-Righ of Erin, be sent for to Alba, and with him the blessing of the sun, the sea, and the earth shall return.”

It was done, and peace and plenty dwelt in Erin during the reign of Feradach, and trials before brehon or chief, or king, were few and short. Over the ring that encircled the throat of Moran, the king obliged him to wear a gorget of the purest gold. This, on being placed on the neck of a lie-asserting witness, would narrow itself, and if the false speaker confessed not the truth, would contract still more and stop his breathing. If chief or brehon suspected accuser, or accused, or witness, of uttering falsehoods, he would call for the collar of Moran and the sight, nay the name, was sufficient to force out the truth. We have lost many blessings enjoyed by our fathers, but could bear our deprivations with content, provided that some mortal, favoured above other mortals, could find his way into the sighe-cavern

where the collar lies, and give it into the possession of some living brehon, more than one of whom is worthy to sit in the seat of Moran."



THE PROPHECY OF CONN CEAD CATHACH.

THE great Danaan king and philosopher, Lucha Mac Ceithlenn, who so bravely did his duty at the fight of Northern Moytura, founded Naas, and it was for centuries the residence of the petty kings of North Leinster. The rath, a portion of which has remained to our days, was once inhabited by these kings. Thus runs its legend.

Conn of the Hundred Battles (A.D. 125-152), while he bore sceptre at Tara, was accustomed at early morning to take a walk on the ramparts of his fortress, accompanied by his three chief druids and his three chief poets. The object of the promenade was to detect any malignant influences which might be hovering in the air, and plotting evil to his interests. If so, his druids and his poets were there to perceive and frustrate the inimical designs.

One morning as he was thus employed, a stone on which his foot rested for the moment, uttered several cries, so loud that they were heard to a long distance over the flat plain of Bregia. When the sounds ceased, he asked his druids the name of the stone, what it had said, and the cause of the outcry. They requested fifty-three days to study the question and prepare the answer, and at the end of that time they thus solved the problem.

"The name of the stone was the *Lia Fail* (stone of destiny), and the number of shouts it had uttered corresponded to the number of his descendants who would rule Erin in succession; their names were, however, hidden from them."

Conn remained in greater trouble after his question was solved than before, and he and his retinue walked on in silence. Suddenly the party were enveloped in a fog so thick that no eye could penetrate it beyond a few cubits' length. All stopped, and after some troubled moments the sound of a horse's tramp was heard, and three casts of a

lance were made at the king, each approaching closer to his person, and the third just grazing it. "Who dares," cried the chief druid, "thus to insult the king's sacred person within the bounds of Tara?" At the moment the fog dispersed, and a noble steed and noble cavalier stood before them. "Far from offering disrespect," said the knight, "I come to pay the Ard Righ of Erin all honour in yonder palace."

They proceeded to the building, across a rich and fertile plain, and found the principal gate overshadowed by a tree whose trunk, boughs, and leaves were all of the finest gold. They entered, and were received by a beautiful and stately princess, before whom were placed a silver vessel filled with red ale, and a golden ladle and goblet. The knight, their conductor, took his seat on the throne. He was of gigantic size, of perfect form, and of a majestic and pleasing countenance.

"I give you welcome," said he, "O! valiant monarch, to the palace of Lucha Mac Ceithlenn. Like other chiefs of that wise and noble people, the Danaans, I enjoy a sighe existence since my mortal career came to an end. I shall reveal to you the length of your reign, and the names of your successors. This lady, who is the guardian sighe of Erin, will first give you an entertainment.

The table was laid, and a noble meal made on one gigantic rib of an ox, and another of a wild boar. The lady filled a golden cup with the red ale, and asked the sighe king to whom should she present it. "Present it," said he, "to him whose title shall be 'Conn of the hundred battles.' He will reign fifty years over Erin, and be slain at Tuath Anírois." The princess again said, "To whom shall this second cup be given?" He answered, "To Art, son of Conn. He will reign thirty years, and be slain at Magh Mucruimhe" (Macroom). She again asked, "To whom shall this cup of red ale be given?" and the answer was, "To Cormac, son of Art," etc., etc. At last, as she approached the coming of St. Patrick, and asked the usual question, the king said "To Laeghaire (*pr.* Laéré), of many conflicts, who shall devastate the Liffey (Leinster), and many other territories. After he has reigned five years

shall come the *Tailgean* (holy offspring, religious soldier); that is, Patrick, a man of great dignity, whom God will honour; who will light a great torch, which shall illuminate Erin even to the sea," etc.

In this manner went on the prophecy till the reign of Fergus, son of Maelduin, slain at Almhain, in 718.



THE MONSTER IN LOCH RUAIGHRE.

IN the days of Conn of the hundred battles, as Fergus King of Ulster was sleeping in his chariot by the sea-shore, the *Imurro Luchorpain* (sea fairies) being pleased with his appearance, approached, lifted him gently out of the vehicle, and were bearing him off to their bowers under the ocean. He awoke as his feet touched the water, and, seeing how matters stood, he seized a fay in each hand, and drawing his arms together he pressed a third close to his breast. "Life for life" (quarter), said they. "You shall have that," answered he, "provided you grant me three wishes." "If within our power, they shall be granted." "My desire is to pass freely and without inconvenience under seas, lakes, and pools." "That power you shall have, but we lay *geasa* on you, never to enter Loch Ruaighre in your own country." Then the chief fairy put herbs in his ears, and his own cowl on his head, and Fergus went safely with them below the waves.

Forgetful of the *geasa* laid on him, Fergus, after enjoying existence under the ocean and many lakes, would needs try what was to be liked or dreaded in Lough Ruaighre. His future fortunes must be given in the words of Mr. O'Curry, the translator of the first volume of *The Senchus Mor* :—

"As he went into the loch he saw in it the *Muirdris*, a frightful sea-monster. One moment it used to contract and then dilate like a smith's bellows. On his beholding it, his mouth became permanently distended to both his ears, and he fled out of the loch; and he said to his charioteer, "How do I appear," and the charioteer replied,

"Thy aspect is not good, but sleep will restore thee." Upon which, therefore, Fergus went into his chariot and slept.

"Now, while he slept, the charioteer went to the wise men of Ulster who were at Emain Macha, and told them the adventures of the king, and he asked them what king they should take after him ; for it was not easy to keep a king with a blemish at Emain.

"The advice of the wise men of Ulster was, that the king's house should be cleared of rabble, that there might be no fools or idiots in it, or persons who would reproach the king with the blemish on his face, and that a muddy bath should always be prepared for him, that he might not see his shadow on the water. They afterwards kept the king in this manner for three years ignorant of his own blemish.

"One day afterwards he bade his bond-maid make a bath for him. He thought that the woman was making the bath too slowly, and he gave her a stroke of his horse-whip. She became vexed, and reproached the king with his blemish, whereupon he gave her a blow with his sword, and divided her in twain.

"He then went off and plunged into Loch Ruaighre, where he remained a day and a night. The loch bubbled up from the contest between him and the sea-monster, so that the noise thereof reached far off into the land. He afterwards came up, and appeared on the surface of the loch, having the head of the monster in his hand, so that all the Ulstermen saw him, and he said to them, 'I am the survivor, O Ultonians !' He afterwards descended into the loch and died, and the loch was red from then for a month afterwards : concerning which was sung—

"Fergus, son of Leidi the king,
Went into Fertais Rudhraidhe ;
He saw a form of no great beauty,
Which was the cause of his blemish."

This strange legend is taken from the book of Brehon Laws already quoted. Its presence in that grave compilation is owing to the eric to which Fergus was amenable for the slaughter of his bond-maid, and to other incidental erics.

THE FORTUNES OF KING CORMAC.

How Cormac chose a Wife.

SOME pity and a great deal of blame have fallen in our days on Irish gentlemen, whose estates, slipping through their hands, have dropped down into a shabby little court in Henrietta-street. If it can be of comfort to the dispossessed to know that their fortune is only the result of causes in operation since the days of Cormac, King of Erin, (reign, 227-268, A.D.) let them enjoy that consolation, and listen to the story of one of their great models, who honoured the neighbourhood of Mount Leinster by his residence about the year 230 of the Christian era. His real name was unpronounceable, so let him be called *Lavlaan* (Broad Hand), and his rank that of a *Bo-Airé* (Gentleman Cowkeeper). His heart, however, was large enough for a king. He kept open house for all passers by; and as our old kings and tanists patronized junketings and cosherings at the houses of their gentlemen-cowkeepers, his halls were seldom without guests. His lands were wide, his cattle many, but a whole province would have been insufficient to satisfy the generous impulses of his big heart. Alas! the cattle were at last killed off, the fuel failed for the mighty fire-places, there was no generous wine, usquebaugh, nor mead, to fill the four cornered silver-hooped medhers. The jolly roistering guests forgot the way to his brugh, and only seven cows and a bull were left out of all his vast possessions. So, getting up one summer morning, he awaked his fair niece Eithné, and they both quitted the once opulent homestead; and driving their small herd before them, they journeyed into the fertile country of Meath, and settled down in a quiet nook, with just enough to maintain an obscure existence by care and economy.

They had in some degree reconciled themselves to this great change in their condition after the lapse of a couple of years, when, towards the close of a fine day, a noble looking Tiernagh happened to be riding by at a short distance from their residence. He observed a beautiful young woman employed in milking, and stopped, apparently to learn the

process. The fair milk-maid, probably unaware of his presence, proceeded thus. She drew a portion of milk from each of her seven cows in succession, and emptied it into one vessel, and then began with the first cow again, and put the produce of the second milking into a separate vessel. After filling her two neat wooden pails, she went into the house, leaving the knight enchanted by her *discretion*, grace, and beauty. He could not stir from the spot, and soon had the happiness of seeing her re-appear, bearing a reaping hook in her delicate hand. She approached a marshy bit of land, and cut a supply of rushes, separating them as she did the milk, into a heap of well-developed, nice-looking reeds, and another of lean, scrubby ones. Her task being over, she carried off her two bundles to the cottage, and the knight's admiration went on increasing with every step she took.

So beautiful she appeared, and so judicious and incomprehensible her conduct, that the knight could no longer remain silent. He accosted the fair Eithné, and begged her to explain what seemed to him so mysterious in her proceeding. "It is easily understood, Sir Tiernach," said she. "My uncle, the great Lavlaan of *Sliav Lainghe*, after exercising boundless hospitality to all that ever entered his gates, is now poorly living in yonder cabin, and you cannot wonder that I reserve the best of the milk for his supper, the best of the rushes for his bed, and the purest of spring water for his drink." "Blessings on your love and care of your kinsman!" said the horseman. "May I hope for welcome for one night from the open-hearted Lavlaan, who has in his time entertained the fourth part of the knights of Erin?" "We have but poor fare to offer you, sir knight, but to such as it is you," etc., etc. "The plainest fare," answered the cavalier, "offered by such hands," etc., etc. Lavlaan, his niece, and the new guest, spent a very pleasant evening together; cakes, fruit, and milk furnished a delicious repast to the three, who were all delighted with each other, and these few plain words uttered by the stranger towards the close of the evening's conversation, seemed to the old gentleman and his fair niece imbued with the very essence of eloquence: "Hospitable Lavlaan, the last of

your guests is Cormac, son of Art, son of Conn of the hundred battles. He is anxious for a companion to share his joys, to comfort him when in trouble, and to whom he may look for pure sympathy in his endeavours for the good of his people. Fair Eithné, ask consent from your uncle and your own heart to be my wife. Whether you obtain it or not, I will give him possession of such a tract of land as will enable him to exercise moderate hospitality during the remainder of his life."

The prospect of resuming his former state, seemed all at once to have taken a score of years off the shoulders of the host. His consent had not to be asked twice, and if Eithné was inclined to give a refusal there were too many obstacles in her way. She became Cormac's queen, and her uncle kept open house once more, but in the reformed style of *Cogia Hassan*.

How Cormac lost and recovered his Throne.

But the possession of the crown of Ireland, and of an accomplished and virtuous queen, did not exempt Cormac from the perils that then environed Irish Kings. He gave a magnificent entertainment to the nobles of Ulster; and while engaged in that hospitable proceeding, his beautiful and luxuriant crop of hair was maliciously set on fire by the treachery of the three brothers, "Fergus of the Black Teeth," "Fergus of the Crooked Teeth," and "Fergus of the Slim Hair."

As no man with any visible personal defect would be allowed to wield the Irish sceptre, poor Cormac was forced to abdicate. So, placing his queen in a place of safety, and committing his son Cairbre to the care of Flaath, his trustiest adherent, he betook himself to the court of Tadhg (Thady), king of the southern portion of Ireland, and a relative of his own. Thady received him with much kindness, and not only promised him assistance, but mentioned where the stout warrior, Lucha Laga, his relative, lived, who if his services could be procured, would be an invincible ally. This champion had killed in battle Art the Melancholy, the father of Cormac, and son of the renowned Conn of the hundred fights. He was now living in a poor cottage, a

prey to sorrow for having joined the foreign mercenaries, against whom Art was defending his country the day he perished by his hand in the battle of Macroon.

Cormac proceeded to Aharla, where he found the great swordsman lying asleep on rushes on the floor of his lowly cabin. After contemplating for some time, with mingled feelings, the stern and grim visage of the slayer of his father, he pricked him with the point of his spear, on which Lucha opening his eyes, and looking angrily at the king, asked who it was that had dared to take such a liberty with him. "I am Cormac, son of Art whom you slew at the fight of Macroon." "Ah! that alone could excuse you: take my life if you choose." "I want not your life. I am told you are a prey to sorrow for having stood by the side of the foreigners, and for having slain the son of the mighty Conn. I bring your cure. I am treacherously driven from my throne by the villany of the three Ferguses. They have not left a single glib of hair on the head of him who was surnamed *Ulfadha* (long-haired); but with the aid of the noble Tadg and your stout arm, I will crush the traitors, and restore you to honour and peace of mind."

"My arms and my life are yours, son of Art: every day will be the length of three till I stand before Fergus of the Black Teeth in the view of the best champions both of *Leath-Cuinn* and *Leath-Mocha* (Conn's portion and Mocha's portion; south and north; an *eiscir* or ridge from Dublin to Galway being the dividing line).

So saying, he shook off his lethargy, accompanied Cormac to Ely where the court was kept, hastened the preparations, roused the enthusiasm of the forces by his presence and his spirit-stirring words; and with little delay the forces of Munster were soon near the field of Criena, where the three brothers of the nicknames were prepared to meet them. Tadg was the more disposed to risk life and dominion for Cormac, as the King of the Black Teeth had slain his own father Cian some time before; but for some reasons which the old chroniclers have not given, he would not allow Cormac to be present in the battle.

Lucha, when his blood was heated in personal conflict, had no command over his violent impulses. Cormac being

aware of this defect in his champion's disposition, had one of his attendants attired in his kingly habiliments, and stood by in the garb of a *galloglach* to watch Lucha's behaviour during the coming strife. So the fight began, and was sturdily maintained on both sides, Tadg doing the duty of a general and swordsman at once ; but Lucha, hewing his resistless way through the Ulster ranks, penetrated to where a Fergus was directing the operations of his men. Cutting down all that intervened, he engaged the ill-fated prince, and in about ten minutes he stood before the pretended Cormac, and throwing down at his feet a gory head, he cried out, "Cormac, son of Art, is that the head of your mortal foe?" "No, brave champion : you may easily see it is his brother of the long hair." "Oh, *Mile Mollachd!*" cried he in angry sorrow, "then I have to begin my toil anew." "CORMAC ABOO!" he shouted in a voice of thunder, and plunging into the fight again, he cut down every warrior that dared to bar his bloody progress, and was soon engaged with the second brother.

This time the strife was longer, for Lucha's arm was swelled, and his limbs somewhat fatigued. But his furious might prevailed again ; and wading back through the prostrate sheaves of that terrible harvest day, he displayed the second princely spoil, and repeated his demand. "Alas ! that is only the head of Fergus of the Crooked Teeth." "*Cead Mile Mollachd!*" shouted he in despair, "Is my task not done? Give me a drink." He sat down for a space in a state of deep dejection ; but after getting the required draught, he roused himself once more, looked rather menacingly on the false Cormac, and waving his heavy sword, he was soon lost in the wild and mad concourse of struggling warriors. The battle, which early in the day had poured its waves to the side of the hill where Cormac stood, was now far withdrawn, and the shouts and trumpet blasts came only faintly to the ears of that king and his trusty squire, for Tadg had well directed the powers of his heroic tribes, and the resistless force of Lucha had struck the boldest of the foes with dismay. Lucha was at last recognised ascending the hill with pain ; his limbs were stiff, and his lorica streaked with dark red gore. Approaching

the kingly likeness, and wearily raising the third proof of his terrible prowess, he cried in tones nearly inarticulate from rage and fatigue, "Whose head is that, Cormac, son of Art?" "Thanks to thy faithful and strong arm, Fergus Black Tooth is no more," answered the squire in a very unassured tone, for there was a fixed, fierce stare in the eyes of the champion, while his fingers were opening and shutting convulsively, and his form and features swelling with some purpose of intense wrath. "Then have him fully to thyself," was the wild and savage reply, and the trophy grasped by the hair was dashed in his face by the insane swordsman, whose forces being exhausted by this last fitful effort, he fell helpless on the hill side. Well was it for the sage Cormac, that he had descended from his kingly state on that day, for his unhappy representative was struck dead by the terrible blow.

The Surgery of the Early Celts.

Tadg had stipulated for reward of his services, that if he won the fight, he was to receive as much land as he could surround between the end of the battle and nightfall, driving in his own chariot. Though wounded in three several places, he drove from the field the moment victory was assured, and ordered the charioteer to take the hill of Tara within his compass, and drive on to Dublin. He stopped his wounds as well as he could, struggled with the anguish arising from them, and neither sighed nor groaned. But the loss of blood brought on weakness, and for a time he was insensible. On recovering out of his lethargy, and recollecting the circumstance in which he was placed, he found himself unable to guess at the duration of his swoon; so leaning forward, he hastily demanded of the charioteer whether they had yet got beyond Tara. The man answered they had not, and the reply so wrought on the weakened and disturbed spirit of the king, that he darted his spear at his driver, and losing strength and recollection at the moment, he fell senseless into the bottom of the chariot.

Cormac had not been unmindful of Tadg's proceedings; and it happened that he was on the spot very soon after this occurrence. Several of the Munster king's trusty fol-

lowers were present, and were doing what they could for him ; but Cormac called to his favourite physician, and requested him in the hearing of all present, to bind up the wounds of his generous ally, and bestow all his care on his recovery. This unprincipled professor, either to gratify some spite of his own, or to indulge his sovereign's supposed wishes, privately conveyed an ugly-looking earwig into one wound, the rusted point of a spear into another, and an ear of barley into a third. By his great skill he wrought an apparent cure, but the poor king remained in a miserable state of weakness and feverish irritation, and scarcely slept an hour for an entire year.

The brave and single-minded Lucha was restored to health and his former vigour by the devoted care of his people after the terrible fight of Criena. As soon as he was able, he set out to visit his king, and never quitted him during his illness. He suspected that some treachery had been resorted to, but the wounds were to all appearance healed, and no case could be made out against the physician. At last, unable to remain looking on without being able to do any good, he set out for Dalriada in the north, and in a short time returned, accompanied by a trusty and skilful physician and his three pupils. The king was questioned concerning the peculiar nature of his sufferings, and as the skilful leech lightly touched the surface where the wounds had been, he cringed and winced under the delicate handling.

So, retiring to the end of the apartment, he directed one of his pupils to lance a wound, and bring him word of what he observed. The poor king heaved a painful sigh as the slight scar was made, and the pupil returning to his master, reported under his breath, that he found a living earwig at the bottom of the wound, tearing and mangling the flesh. The second pupil tried another wounded spot, caused the patient to sigh more painfully than before, and reported his discovery of a rusty spear point infecting all around it. The third drew such a sigh from the sufferer, that all thought it was over with him, and the doctor was then made aware that an ear of spiked barley was doing its horrid office in the third wound. The skilful man said as little

as if, instead of the "OLLAV CEANNFADHA, *Dalriada*, third century," his card bore the words—"Merrion Square, North, 1871." He left the room, and returning in a quarter of an hour, the suffering king with his eyes fixed on the door, was dismayed by seeing the sage enter at a rapid pace, fury in his eyes, and a bright red-hot coulter in his hand. He directly charged the bed of sickness, and the terrified patient sprang out at the other side with all the strength he could muster. The violent movement, aided by the previous scarring, caused the wounds to burst open, and out flew the earwig, the rusted spike, and the ear of barley. Thus by the good natured zeal of Lucha Laga, and the skill of the wise physician, was saved the life of a brave warrior and a good sovereign. It will scarcely be supposed from the circumstances of the story, that Lucha was brother to Tadg's grandfather, and Cormac's father brother to his (Tadg's) grandmother; yet so the relationship stands in the genealogies.

A Rash Experiment.

Great joy was expressed by Cormac's people on his restoration to the throne, and gladsome the meeting between himself and his amiable and discreet consort. Among the welcoming faces that thronged round him he missed Flaath, to whom he had entrusted the care of his young son. He was on the point of sending for him and his pupil, when a disturbance was perceived at the entrance of the court, and among a rather disorderly concourse entering at the moment, he recognized Flaath, with his hands manacled, in custody of his own servants, and with his own wife as director of the proceedings. "What is the meaning of this disorder, and why is not my son present?" said the king, addressing the pinioned man; but he hung his head, and made no answer. "*Mo chuma* (my sorrow)!" cried out his wife, "that I should be the accuser of my own husband! but my duty to my king is above all. Welcome to your royal chair, Cormac, son of Art. May your posterity never be strangers to this royal house! I lately saw my husband sunk in thought and sadness, after I had found the place of Prince Cairbre vacant in our rath; and after much im-

portunity, which I used through loyalty and love to the child of my king, he acknowledged that he had slain him at the instigation of Fergus Black Tooth, who had engaged to raise him to power and the possession of mighty riches. Before he opened his soul to me, O wise Cormac, he bound me with solemn oaths to keep silence ; but my oath I regard not in comparison of my duty to thy royal house."

"Sayest thou nought, O ! traitor," cried the enraged and sorrowful father, "for thy defence, or by way of denial ! Restore my son living, and any other design or deed shall be pardoned thee !" "Alas ! great and sage monarch, what can I say ? The partaker of my every wish, my every desire, my every thought, has denounced me. All my possessions are not worth the eric of Cormac's son : I must pay it with my life." "But," said the sage Feilim, the king's favourite brehon, "no man is called on to accuse himself, and a woman's testimony is not admissible when her husband's life hangs on a judge's word." Here the keen councillor observed a slight gesture of the lady, seeming to invite a richly dressed, but cunning and vulgar-looking, person to come forward. He accordingly gave evidence to the effect that having to speak to Flaath, he was on the point of entering the apartment where the confession had taken place, and that having unintentionally heard a part of the acknowledgment, he had considered it a duty he owed to his king to get to the bottom of the treason. This seemed conclusive. However Feilim of the Keen Faculties, by careful sifting of this witness, made him acknowledge that he was the son of a poor shepherd on the lands of Flaath, that he had received many kindnesses from the prisoner, that he had been finally promoted to the highest offices he could procure him, that he had amassed riches, and possessed flocks and herds, and that he was a frequent visitor at Flaath's rath, and oftener in the absence than in the presence of its master. All these circumstances brought on the head of the treacherous upstart the contempt of the assembly ; and were there any hopes of the prince's safety the witnesses would have probably been made victims of public dislike ; but Flaath would make no revelation, and was placed in secure custody, his wife and favourite being also

obliged to occupy neighbouring apartments well guarded, very much to their own surprise and disgust.

Now the councillor had long known Flaath, and was besides a keen observer of character; he held a strong opinion of his innocence, gave the sorrowful parents some slight hopes of yet finding their son alive, and set himself to acquire information bearing on the case. Flaath, in an interview he held with him, would give no information whatever; and so, after examining the two witnesses apart, he came to the conclusion that they had spoken the truth, though with bad motives, or had made themselves thoroughly well up in a fabricated story.

Next morning he learned from Flaath's keeper that he had offered him a large sum for conniving at his escape. This sum, if the keeper agreed, was to be obtained from the sister of the prisoner, in whose hands it had been deposited some time before for safety. The councillor directed the keeper to seem to comply, and to send a trusty person for the reward, as Flaath had proposed.

Next day, he examined the keeper as to the result of yesterday's arrangement, and this was the report. Having consented in appearance to the request of the prisoner, a trusty messenger had been sent to his sister, requesting her to send the money deposited with her, in order to procure his means of escape; but she not only denied having ever received such deposit, but threatened to acquaint the king with this new proceeding on his part, and denounce the keeper for his share in the attempted escape.

Next day was appointed for the final examination and passing of judgment. In the afternoon, the friendly councillor received a message from Flaath requesting a visit. He staid upwards of an hour in secret conference with him, but nothing afterwards transpired to effect any change in the position of the parties.

The court was assembled at an early hour, and the witnesses repeated their accusations without the slightest wavering from the former statement. Flaath being called on for defence or explanation, declined to make any; but as sentence was about to be passed, Feilim, addressing the presiding judge, said he had just been made aware of some

important facts which a witness in attendance was ready to give. Consent being obtained, a side door was opened ; and every face expanded with joy and surprise, when the young prince, radiant with youth, joy, and beauty, flew out and hastening forward, threw himself into the arms of his father. As soon as he was released, he hastened to his tutor, and testified the liveliest joy for having been in time to save him from peril.

When quiet was restored, and the young prince had gone to the apartments of the queen to banish her sorrow, Cormac desired an explanation which, at a look from Flaath, was afforded by the sage and good natured Feilim.

"Wise and just sovereign; if Flaath had not already been well punished, I would demand a considerable eric to be inflicted on him for his unexampled folly. The sage Fithil, his father, being on his bed of death, charged his son to observe these four requests,—never to take charge of a prince,—never to entrust his wife with a secret involving life or death,—never to entrust his sister with a large sum of money, and never to advance a person of low birth or habits to a place of honour and trust. Out of a blameable curiosity to test the wisdom of these instructions, he broke through them all, and only that he had had the precaution to give the care of the prince to an upright friend, this evening would have found him a headless corpse."

"And what, in your judgment, should be the punishment of the false wife, and the false friend, and the false sister?" said the king. "With your approval, great Cormac," was the answer, "let the sister resign the deposits, let the churl be restored to his father's shealing, without a cow, without a sheep, without a yoke of land ; set the false wife sitting on the large stone before his door, and leave their after punishment to themselves."



THE HILL OF BELLOWING OXEN.

IN the reign of this Cormac, one of the wisest of ancient Irish kings (wise after the fashion of Ulysses, be it under-

stood), and in the third century of our era, a cause of quarrel arose between him and the king of the southern part of the island (*i.e.*, all to the south of the *Eiscir Riadha*, before mentioned).

This King of the south, Fiacha by name, was born on the same day with Cormac. Their fathers, *i.e.*, Eogan of Munster, and Art the Melancholy, were slain on the same day, in the bloody battle of Macroom, fighting side by side against Mac Con the ally of the foreigners. The two princes, of whom our tale will treat, were relations ; and both were born after the death of their fathers. Yet these circumstances did not prevent one from making war on the other. The causes and the circumstances of this war being differently related by the dry annalists and by the poets, we, for obvious reasons, take the latter pleasant authorities for our guides.

Cormac was not only generous—he was lavish of gifts. Frequently was his right hand in his pouch for the purpose of flinging money to bard or soldier. Cloaks, drinking-cups, shields, swords, serving-women, and cows were liberally bestowed, and at a time when he was almost as poor, by reason of the liberality exacted from every king and chief, as one of his poorest *bodachs*, there came into his presence Mainne, the keeper of the royal herds ; and, at the instigation of *Crom* or *Plutus*, he asked the distressed sovereign for a present of cows, more in number than I care to mention. “Where am I to get them, you son of a short-horned bull,” said the perplexed king ; “and why did you not apply before my yearly tributes were dispersed ?” Saying this, he retired into his inner room, and remained there studying wisdom for three days and three nights, without any satisfactory result.

At the end of that uncomfortable period, Mainne, the keeper of cows, disturbed his solitude. “Cormac,” said he, “is it what I have asked that grieves you ?” “It is, indeed,” was the answer. “Then, by your hand, my king, I will soon relieve you. Have you made the circuit of Erin ?” “I have not.” “Well, I have ; and out of the five provinces, the two that belong to Fiacha give you but the tributes of one ; and Fiacha, that rules them, is the

successor of Mac Con, son of Mac Nia, son of Lucha, who slew your father in the field of Macroom; and my advice is, that you demand of the King of Leath Mocha that unpaid tribute." "Blessings on you, Mainne; that is a just demand. You are no longer son of the bull, but son of good counsel."

So eager was the embarrassed king to discharge his debt to Mainne, that he would, without further ceremony, have incontinently invaded Munster for his cattle spoil; but Irish and Gaulish monarchs enjoyed but very limited authority over their farmers or fighting men. So he was obliged to convene his *Flaiths* (chiefs) and *Urmaidhes* (tributaries), and propose the subject. By their counsel, he despatched Tairreach the Traveller, and Bearrai the Rover, to Cnoc Raffan, near Cashel, then called *Tulach na Righ* (hill of the kings), the regal abode of Fiacha. These worthies demanded, with all suitable ceremony, that fifty cows with silver horns, as well as the tribute of a province, should be forthwith forwarded to King Cormac at Tara. Fiacha called his chief people to him and stated Cormac's demand. He then betook himself to his *grianan* or his garden, leaving refusal or acceptance to the decision of his "best men." At the proper time, he re-entered the hall of wise counsel, and asked the result of their consultation. "To the king of Tara," said they "we will (seeing that he is in a strait), make a gift of a cow from every lios in Munster; but the value of a goat's ear we will not pay as tribute." "Had you come to another resolution," said the king, "I would never again lead you to battle, but go and dwell amongst a strange people. But, lest these should prove unauthorized messengers, we will send our decision to Cormac, son of Art, by Cuilleán the Swift and Leithrinde the Robust."

The swift and robust messengers having reached Tara, stood in the king's presence, and said, "Cormac, sovereign of Leath Cuiunn, Fiacha, king of Leath Mocha, desires to know if Tairreach the Traveller and his companion have been authorized by you to demand," etc. The result of the debate which ensued was a declaration of war.

So Cormac summoned his five chief druids that had spoken true prophecies through the reigns of Conn, Art, and

Cormac—namely, Cithach, Cithmor, Ceacht, Croda, and Cithrúa, and he bade them prophesy in truth what should be the result of the expedition. They asked for time; and they went into the depths of their knowledge and learning, and revelations were made to them, and they were brought one by one before Cormac—viz., Citach, Cithmor, Ceacht, Croda, and Cithrúa, and all their prophecies pointed to the one result. These are some of the verses they recited before the king's seat :—

“Cormac, son of Art, unjust is the claim.
 Make not your bravery known for the sake of a herdsman.
 It is not just to press on freemen
 With warriors of the same race.
 Sad to enter the land of Mocha.
 Mouths will whiten, ravens will belch.”

But Cormac would not be turned from his purpose. And as he was hunting near the *sighe* (fairy hill) of Cleithi, his dogs swept after a hare which just rose before him, and a fog, dark as night, surrounded him, and deep sleep fell on him, and through his slumber he was enchanted with the sweet music of the *cuishliona* (bag-pipes). It was the two beautiful hands of the daughter of the king of the Sighe of Bairce that he first saw when he awoke from his drowsiness. Her gown was of gold thread, and over it hung a beautiful mantle; and the first words that came from her red lips were a reproach to Cormac for hunting a hare, instead of the wolf, or stag, or wild boar. “But,” said the maiden, “I know what is nearest your heart, and I will supply you with three female druidic champions, Eirgi, Eang, and Eangan, daughters of Maol Miscadach. Each has the fight of a hundred, and they are in the forms of three gray sheep, with bony heads and jaws of iron. None can escape from them, for they are as swift as the swallow, and all the swords and axes in the world could not hurt them.

“And moreover, for the love I bear thee, I will give thee the two renowned druids, Colpa and Lurga, sons of Cicul. They are gifted with all knowledge; they are invulnerable, and the whole people of a province shall fall before them.” So Cormac went with the lady into the sighe, and staid there three days, and was bound in favour to her druids,

men and women, and no more regarded the true revealers of secrets, Cithach, Cithmor, Ceacht, Croda, and Cithrua.

So Cormac, taking with him the three druidesses—Eirgi, Eang, and Eangan, and the two druids—Colpa and Lurga, proceeded southwards. The first evening they set up their tents in Cluain, and the next at Ath na Nirlann; and at the dark shades of evening on the third day, they reached Formaoil na Fian. The fourth resting-place was Ath Cro, and the fifth Imluich Iban.

At last they reached *Cnoc na Ceann* (hill of heads), called afterwards the “Hill of Bellowing Oxen” (Knoc Long, near Limerick), and there Cormac fixed to set up his royal tent, and summon Leath Mocha for tribute. “Set up the pole of my tent, O Cithrua,” said he, “for this thou hast done for my father and grandfather.” And Cithrua essayed to do it, and though his strength was as that of a score, yet neither the brown clay nor the grass would admit the hard, sharp point of the tent-pole. “Be this a last warning to you, O Cormac, that your claim is unjust, and that you are here to meet defeat from the host of Fiacha.”

“Colpa,” said Cormac, “hear you what Cithrua says? but I turn not back for the glaive of the hero, nor the druid’s wand of power. Set up the pole thyself.” And Colpa raised the tall, thick staff, and with the strength of two score strong men he dashed it against the ground. The brown earth and the green grass resisted it as a flat rock, and the hard, tough wood was shattered into small atoms.

“What’s to be done now?” said Cormac. “This is to be done,” said Cithrua and the other druids; “here are numerous companies of men; let them collect sods and cover the hills, and so shall the royal tent be set up.” This was done. Three days and three nights were spent in settling the camp, and Cithrua and his brothers were rebuked by Colpa for their backwardness in helping out the designs of Cormac; but they said they foresaw their own deaths, and the defeat of Cormac in the expedition. “Nor will you be better off” said they. “Yourself, and Lurga, and the druidesses, Eirgi, Eang, and Eangan, will perish by the dread power of Mocha Ruith, chief of living druids.”

At the end of three days messengers went to the king of Leath Mocha, demanding *cumhal* (subjection) and tribute, or single combat. Cumhal or tribute was refused, but a single combat was offered on the third day. So the men of Munster were marshalled in twenties. Every commander of a score was equal in skill and valour to twenty men, and every one of his warriors to nine. There was Fionn's twenty, Feargus's twenty, Doncha's twenty, Donn's twenty, etc. And Mocha Corb, son of Cormac Cas, son of Oilioll Oluim, was to be their eulogizer ; and eight men and twenty score marched to Ath Colpa, to meet the same number from Leath Cuinn in strife and fierce battle. Cairbre Liffeachair, son of Cormac, was to be the eulogizer of the warriors from the north, but not a man of them would put the right foot beyond the left, when the morning of the fight lighted up the hills.

Then went on Colpa alone, and engaged the adverse warriors at Ath Colpa, and fierce was the contest, and powerful were the blows. "It was blow for blow they dealt each other, and a reply to the reply." Three times that day were his arms and armour forced from Colpa, and his blows and his fury were only increased. Through the wounds in Fionn's body you could see the sky, but still he fought for three days, and then was slain.

And so Colpa, by going into the secrets of his knowledge, and learning, and deviltry, and by putting confidence in his gods, slew Fionn and his twenty men. Then did Lurga maintain battle and conflict with Failve and his twenty men ; and day after day the fight was fought, until eighty and two hundred were slain of the men of Leath Mocha ; and there was not a wound on the bodies of Colpa nor Lurga so large as the tip of a fly's wing.

Then did Cormac demand the fight of three against three hundred ; and Eirgi, Eang, and Eangan came to the ford in the appearance of three gray sheep, with bony heads, with iron jaws, with strength to destroy a hundred in the day of battle, and the swiftness of swallows in flight. Yet all the point and edge of the world could not cut wool nor hair from them. And so did the warriors of the south prepare each man his hard, red-spotted darts, his hard,

starry shield, his three heavy *chloidhim* (glaives), and his ready spears, formed for performing deeds of destruction and slaughter. And during all that first day they were occupied in defending themselves against the charges of the sheep, and striving in vain to pierce them with their sharp darts, and the casts from their long, heavy, sharp lances, or wound them with their sharp, cutting glaives ; but not so much as a tuft of wool or a lock of hair were they able to shear away. Nor did the sheep do them more harm on that day than break with furious blows from their hard, bony heads the arms and armour of the warriors. And at night both parties retired to their camps.

Next morning began the strife of death and destruction for the men of the south. The loud, ringing, very heavy blows of the swords on the bony heads of the sheep, and the battering of the hard shields by the same heads, were heard in the two camps, while the three druidesses charged under them, over them, and through them, till the ford was filled by the bodies, and the banks were covered by them. And the sheep made a pile of the dead bodies, and the silken shirts, and the arms, and the armour ; and those who remained alive carried their dead brothers to the camp, and all raised a loud shout of grief over the slain heroes. But from that day forward the Munster men would no more stand in battle array against the druids of Cormac, son of Art.

Once more Cormac demanded tribute of the chiefs of Fiacha, and they would not pay it ; and then he gave directions to his druids, and they entered into the depths of their learning, and they had confidence in their gods, and they breathed a strong druidical breath on the clouds, and the heaths, and the spring heads ; and all the streams, and rivers, and lakes in the south were dried up, and the men were afflicted with unbearable thirst.

Then Cormac again demanded *cumhal* and tribute, and it was refused, for they brought from all parts of Leath Mocha, to the camp, curds and whey, and cheese ; and the warriors were able to keep the life within them. At last the druids got new orders from Cormac, and they flung a baleful druidical breath on the horses, and asses, and cows,

and sheep, and goats of Leath Mocha, and their milk was stayed, and nothing was heard through the land but the neighing, and lowing, and braying, and bleating, and sneezing of the cattle.

The tribute was again asked, and again refused, for they mixed the blood of the cattle with dew gathered from the grass and the leaves before the sun rose. But at last the warriors became as weak as infants of a week old, and Fiacha finally agreed to pay *cumhal* and tribute.

Then did pride and haughtiness enter the heart of Cormac, and he laid heavy tributes and burthens on the people of Leath Mocha, so that were it not that death and the doom of final fate waited at their doors, they would not agree to the demand of the people of Leath Cuinn.

At this time Dil, grandfather to Fiacha, came to the camp from his fort of Druim Dil in the Desies ; and when they told him their straits and their distress, he said to them "There is only one man within the four seas of Erin that can relieve you, and that is Mocha Ruith, your foster-father, O Fiacha, whose abode is in the Isle of Dairbre (Valencia). There is no one within or without a *sighe*, that can equal him in magic. But I am sure he will require a fine tract of land, and will not choose to be a *Roy Damhna* (successor elect) to this or the other prince, for he finds himself too solitary and too confined in his island of wave-beaten rocks. Said Fiacha and his chiefs—"Bring Mocha Ruith to us, O Dil, and promise him whatever his soul or heart desires."

So Dil went westwards, and nothing is said of his journey till he stood before Mocha Ruith ; and the man inquired, and the other answered, till the druid, deeply skilled in magic, knew of the sufferings and the straits of the people of the south country.

Then said Mocha "Great is the distress of the people of *Muimhe* (Munster), and it is I only who can relieve them. These are the things I demand, and Mocha Corb, son of Cormac Cas, son of Oilíoll Oluim, and Donn Dairine and other princes must ensure their delivery ; that is to say one hundred milch cows, one hundred swine, one hundred oxen capable of labour, one hundred steeds with their

trappings, fifty handmaidens, and the daughter of the second best man in Munster for my wife. I must get as much land of my own choosing as my giolla can walk round in a day, and be appointed master of the *riddhairs* (chevaliers) of Leath Mocha. I am also to be the king's chief adviser, and my son, and his son, and all my direct heirs are to enjoy these rights after me."

So Dil returned to the camp, and told all that the man of deep knowledge had said ; and Mocha Corb, and Donn Dairine, and the other sureties, arose and proceeded to the dwelling of Mocha, and he entertained them with the best, and he and they bound themselves to each other in words of poetry, and then he prepared for his journey.

Mocha Rua desired his disciple, Ceanvar, to bring him his travelling equipage, that is to say, his two fair straight-horned oxen from Slia Mish, and his handsome, strong, mountain-ash chariot, with its spokes of bronze, and many carbuncle stones—and night and the light of day were alike to those who were in it, and his shining sword, and his yew-tree bow, and his two well-made spears, and his untanned bull's hide in his chariot, on the sides and on the seat beneath him, and his host of one hundred and thirty followers along with him.

As they journeyed eastwards these nobles asked him who would choose land and territory for him, and he answered, "To no living person will I entrust that but to myself ; give me the earth of each country we pass through, and I will choose the best by its smell, and I will blame no one for the choice, be it good or be it bad."

They came to Glen Beithvé, in the country of Corca Duiné, and he put the earth of it to his nose and liked not its smell ; and in like mode he tried and rejected the earth of sundry tracts of land, till he came to Fermoy. On the earth of this country being brought to him, he said these words, choosing it as his reward :—

"Woody mountains, woody plains !
A plain abounding in pleasant streams,
With large rivers, with rivulets, where hunts were arranged ;
Where will be multiplied generations,
Hosts, assemblies, mighty men of wounds,
Warriors of pointed arms—iron under them, iron on them ;
Valiant men of Leath Mocha !"

Mocha Ruith then began rooting up the ground in search for the water, and he began this poem :—

“ I pray for pleasant, flowing streams—ye gods be willing ;
 I pray for well-tasted springs north-west in Munster ;
 I pray for cooling cascades—water that time will not diminish.”

* * * * *

When this was over the water burst the fastnesses of the earth, and great was its noise ; and he told them all to save themselves from the waters. And Ceanvar on seeing the waters flooding forth, pronounced an exultant charm on them, and prophesied all the benefit they would bring to Fiacha and his long-enduring and heroic warriors.

Mocha Ruith invited the king to drink, the flaiths to drink, the keepers of large herds and owners of fertile lands to drink, and the common people and their cattle to drink ; and they went to the water in groups and in companies, and they all stooped down, both men, and steeds, and herds, until they were satisfied. After this the water was let flow to all the people, and it was let flow through the glens, and rivers, and springs of the province, and the magic spell that was laid on them was removed.

After this the men of Munster raised their shout of triumph, and it was heard in the camp of Cormac ; and messengers were sent to say that neither ransom nor tribute would be given to the king of Leath Cuinn. They were seized with wonder when they saw the flowing of the waters ; but their fright and terror was very great when Mocha raised a clear druidic cloud between the two camps, and magnified his own form through it. His head appeared like a high hill covered with wood, his eyes like two fires, and his mouth a dark cavern.

If they were terrified at this druidic appearance of Mocha, the terrors of desolation were on them when they saw his foster-brother, Gaura, sister's son to Beanbuanane, the druidess, walking round their high camp. He made his hair like the firs on a hill. His dress was hung all over with the teeth, and bones, and horns of wild deer, and rams, and boars, and he swung an iron club in his right hand, and he gave three deafening screams that turned the blood in the men of Leath Cuinn to cold ice.

The camp of Cormac had been raised by the sods gathered by the soldiers, and by the *draoidheacht* (magic) of Colpa and Lurga, to a great height; and the troops of Leath Mocha could not see what was passing therein. So now they besought Mocha to reduce its pride and its elevation, and he pronounced this charm against it:—

“I subdue, I subdue ramparts, I subdue clouds of darkness;
I subdue enchantment, I subdue magic spells and deeds;
I unseat hill off hill till they lie beneath my feet.”

The hill soon went to nothing in dark clouds and wreaths of mist; and it was terrifying to hear the bellowing of the oxen, the rushing of the steeds, and the smashing of arms, as the hill swiftly sunk to its base. Then Cormac reproached his druids, and Colpa went forth with his iron-rimmed shield, with his two-edged, heavy glaive, that shot light from its blade, and with his two black, smoky, very ponderous lances, and by his magic he made himself of gigantic size. Cairbre Liffeachair came with him to sing his praises, till they stopped at the ford of *Raheen an Imaraig* (fort of ravaging).

When the warriors of Leath Mocha saw the dark, threatening form coming to the ford, they called on Mocha Ruith, and he forthwith armed and equipped his best man, Ceanvar, to meet the druidic champion. He put on him his star-sparkling shield, his broad-bladed, very heavy sword, and he gave his two precious spears into his hands; and Mocha Corb was selected as before to witness his deeds and extol his heroism. When they were setting off to the ford, Mocha Ruith called out to Ceanvar—“Bring me my stone of power, and my hand-stone, and my combatant of a hundred, and the slaughterer of my enemies.” And it was brought to him; and he was praising it and putting spells on it, and he composed this poem:—

“I beseech my hand-stone that will break helmets in valiant fight,
My strong flaming stone, be a red watery serpent.
Woe to him around whom thou twinest!
Be a serpent of nine folds round the body of Colpa.
Be a briar rough and strong, my brave, faithful stone!
Woe to Colpa and Lurga when thou enfoldest them!
Let their bodies be under dogs in the red ford of slaughter!”

This druidic stone was put into Ceanvar's hand by Mocha Ruith, and he was told its use and its power; and Colpa did not see his foe till he came to the edge of the ford. Then Ceanvar put the *Lia Milidh* (hero's stone) into the water, and it became a fierce, rough, very formidable serpent, and it glided through the water to meet Colpa. When Ceanvar's foot touched the bed of the stream, he became, by the spells of his master, a huge stone in the centre of the water, and the substance of that stone took his shape, and defied the druid of Leath Cuinn. Colpa rushed on to meet it, and the gash he made in the hard stoney shape with his large heroic sword would have held in its lips the body of a full-grown child. Then did the serpent seize on Colpa, and locked his body in nine folds, and three times they struggled round the ford, and for every two times they fell Colpa was one time uppermost. At last the serpent forced away Colpa's arms and armour, and getting one fold under him and another over him, and striking him on the forehead, hurled him to the bottom of the stream. Said Mocha Corb to Ceanvar, "Wilt thou quit the ford without any trophy to show thy prowess and thy victory to Fiacha, to Mocha Ruith, and to the warriors of Leath Mocha?" Then arose Ceanvar from his enchanted, shapeless form, and with a mighty blow from the heavy, sparkling glaive of Mocha Ruith, he smote the head of Colpa from his body. To the bank he came staggering, and there he fell into a death-resembling swoon; and Mocha Corb bore the fear-causing head of the druid to the camp; and from that time the name *Ath Colpa* has remained on the ford.

"Why is not Ceanvar the bearer of the head of Colpa?" said Mocha Ruith. "He lies in a weakly swoon at the ford," said Mocha Corb. "That is a pity," said Mocha Ruith. "Had he brought me the head of the fierce druid of Leath Cuinn, no warrior with arms and armour should ever overcome one of his race in single fight. And because you have filled his duty, your descendants shall sit in the royal chair of the south, and victory in the fight of two men shall ever be theirs! When the head of Colpa was seen by the warriors of Fiacha they raised a shout of joy

and triumph ; but the shout that went up from the camp of Cormac was full of anger and very deep sorrow.

Next day Lurga came to the ford, and Ceanvar went to meet him with the champion-stone and the charmed spears of Mocha Ruith. Deep was his dread of the wise and valiant Lurga ; and as he went, thus he did. He began praising and beseeching his hand-stone, and prophesying the destruction it would make ; and he put his confidence in his gods, and in the arch-druid of the world ; and he said :—

“Stone flag, stone of friendship, without deceit ;
Slender, thin stone, choice arm of destruction ;
Stone of reward, stone of victory ;
Stone of great injury, stone of colours ;
Friendship of Munster-men, without disgrace !
A stone that triumphs is my stone.”

When the champions met in the ford, they gave blow for blow to each other, and reply to the reply. They grasped each other with the might of heroes, and twisted and swayed each other, and at last the strength of the battle-stone, and the conqueror of a hundred went between them. The enchantment of hosts, the great valiant eel (viz., the magic hand-stone) whose name was Mongach, passed between them ; and she flew at Lurga as she did at Colpa ; and when she touched him the draoideacht quitted his body, and he became like another man. Then did Ceanvar rush at him with the magic blade of Mocha Ruith, and separated his head from his body ; and no more was seen of Lurga.

While the battle was going on, the armies were looking at it from the heights, and praying to their gods for the victory. But when the monster slew Lurga, she went in pursuit of Cairbré Liffeachair, and to slay the hosts of Cormac ; and Ceanvar followed, curbing her, and speaking to her, and telling her that it was displeasing to the men of Munster to have her in pursuit of the enemy without justice, and to lose their honour thereby ; and he uttered these verses to her :—

“Stop, Muinceach Maeth-Reamhar, you monster !
You broad, proud, slender thing, you brown otter !
You red, fiery tongue with the flaming mouth ;
Powerful, black-clouded, breath-like mist on high mountains !

Let the fair youth depart : it was not to fight he came.
He oppressed not the free-born round Fiacha Muilleathain.
Darling of the royal druid, return to thy first disposition ;
Lie on the smooth hand of the great Mocha Ruith !”

Hereon she resumed her own shape and appearance again, and Cairbre went northwards to his people unmolested ; and nothing more was done until morning.

At that time the three druidesses, Eirgi, Eang, and Eangan, came to the ford in the likeness aforesaid—that is, as three gray sheep, with hard, bony heads, with iron jaws, with the speed of swallows, with the power of a hundred in the hour of battle and slaughter. “Mild man of years,” (Mocha Ruith, *to wit*) said the men of Munster, “here are coming three enemies in the shape of gray sheep, and a hundred armed warriors are invariably slain by them in battle.” “I will defend you from them,” said Mocha Ruith, “and be not dismayed. Where are the three magic talismans which I gave you?” said he to Ceanvar. “I have them,” replied he ; “the fire-stone, the sand-stone, and the sponge.” Mocha struck the fire-stone on the sand-stone, and the spark that flew out fell on the sponge. Then did he pass the stones through the fire, and he muttered words of draoideacht over them, and then extinguished the flame. He then passed them through the hands of Ceanvar, and they were laid on the ground. “What see you now?” said he to Ceanvar ; and he answered, “Two bitches and a dog-hound are made of them.” He then turned their heads northward towards the sheep. They were weak as young whelps at first, but the nearer the sheep approached, the more did the size, eagerness, and strength of the hounds increase. Mocha Ruith said, “How do the sheep appear?” “They come,” said Ceanvar, “displaying their jaws ; the oldest sheep in front, and the youngest in the rear.” “And the hounds?” “They are like whelps opening their eyes, and it is the sheep they gaze at.” “How are the sheep now?” “They are sweeping towards us—two in front and one in the rear. And now they are like three mighty oxen under one hard equal yoke, and swiftly, and powerfully, and preparedly they come to the battle.” “And the dogs?” “Their ears are raised, so is the hair on their necks ; and

they hold down their heads, with their mouths shut." "Those are their gifts; for if they opened their mouths, evil powers would steal their forces. Therefore it is with closed mouths they do victorious deeds. How now?" "They have become large, strong, and fierce. They are rushing forwards; they are at Raheen an Imaraig on this bank, and the sheep in the rath on the other bank, and they are examining each other."

Then burst flames from the breasts of the sheep, and burned up the grass and the bushes on each side of the ford, and both parties began the fight with showers of stones and earth, which they flung at each other across the ford. After a while the male dog sprung across and seized the largest sheep, and his companions each seized one, and the flames they blew from their mouths left neither lock of hair nor tuft of wool which they did not consume. But the fire which flashed from the sheeps' breasts did no harm to the dogs; for when Mocha Ruith first came to the host of Munster, he blew a weighty druidical breath on the air, which drew all the magic power from the wise and powerful men of Leath Cuinn.

So the sheep, finding themselves bereft of their magic powers, mightily smote the ground with their feet, as is the manner of their tribe when they wish to strike terror into their enemies, but the enchanted dogs regarded them not. So they turned and fled, and ceased not till they came to Dubhcaire, and sunk into the depths and bowels of the earth. Down after them went the dogs, and they ceased not till they ate up the sheep to the smallest bone. Then they leaped up to the level of the earth, and they went westwards into Munster; and all the mad dogs through Erin have sprung from these druidical hounds of Mocha Ruith, and all the mad dogs that shall be for ever.

The two armies of the south and the north were looking from the hills on the fierce battle of the dogs and the sheep, and sad and spiritless was the army of Leath Cuinn, and their king. "To my grief," said Cithrua, "is Leath Mocha glad to-night; I would rather my own house were burning. And you," said he to Cormac, "must fly in the battle, and thousands will be slain. And it will not be better for my

brothers and myself, for we shall be changed into grey stones by Mocha Ruith when he comes in pursuit. Alas for us and for Leath Cuinn to-night !”

“Prophecy for us something joyful, O Cithrua !” said Cormac, “for you were my grandfather’s and my father’s chief druid ; and we are not here by your advice, and to you we have not given due honour.” “I have no prophecy,” said Cithrua, “but that which I prophesied before—flight and disgrace to you, and death to my brothers and myself.” “Go to Mocha Ruith,” said Cormac, “and remind him that his father and grandfather were of Leath Cuinn, and offer him the sovereignty of Uladh, and the tribute of the sons of Uisneach, and a cow from every lios from Teamur to Carrig na Bracuidhe, three hundred steeds, three hundred cups, three hundred mantles, and the honour of being on my right hand when drinking.”

Cithrua goes with this message, and he finds Mocha Ruith on the eve of his departure for the sighe of Bean Buan Aine, his foster-mother ; and he took him aside, and reminded him of his old relationship with the nobles of Leath Cuinn, and entreated him not to bring that country into trouble and slavery. He then made him the offers as he had received them from Cormac. “I ought to be severe upon them,” said Mocha Ruith, “and I would not forsake my ward, Fiacha, for all the gold that is on the earth ; and if Munster contained but Mocha Corb alone, I would not give up his friendship.” So Cithrua returned to the camp ; and sad and sorrowful were Cormac and his warriors when Cithrua told his news. But Mocha Ruith departed for the sighe of Bean Buan Aine the druidess, and he stayed with her a day and a night ; and she gave him advice as to the order and mode of battle in which the men of Leath Mocha would fight with the men of Leath Cuinn.

We are now to speak of Cormac’s doings. He asked Cithrua if he had any relief for the army. “I have not any,” said Cithrua, “but to make a druidical fire. Let the army go to the wood, and bring wild ash with them, for in that the power of our art is, and in likelihood it will be answered from the south. When the fires kindle let all be watching, and if they turn to the south, I do not advise

you, O Cormac, to follow farther the men of Munster; and if the fires turn towards the north, then betake yourselves to flight." Then the army went to the wood, and they brought bundles of wild ash with them to the camp.

The men of Munster on seeing this, said to Mocha Ruith, "Mild man, what is that which Leath Cuinn is doing?" "Making great piles of wild ash they are, not less than the hill we levelled for them." "Truly," said the men of Munster, "it is right to answer that, for Cormac has turned to his own druids, and that is an enchanted fire which they have made." Said Mocha Ruith, "Let all go to Caill Leathard, southwards, and let not your gathering be less, and every man bring a bundle of branches with him. But let Fiacha go alone, and bring an armful with him from the moist side of the mountain where are the three shelters, that is, the shelter from the red March wind, shelter from the sea wind, and shelter from the scorching wind, in order that the fire may blaze at the first kindling." When every man had his bundle of boughs of the mountain-ash, they all returned to the camp; and Mocha gave instructions to Ceanvar for the construction and kindling of the heaps.

Then Mocha Ruith directed every warrior to cut a thin chip from his spear-shaft, and all these chips he rolled into a ball, and said:—

"I mix a blazing powerful fire;
It will thin the woods, it will wither the grass,
A powerful blaze—enough its speed;
It will soar upwards, a heavenly stream."

And he put to it fire struck from his druidic fire-stone, and it blazed forth with a great flame and a great noise, and he spoke words of power as the first flash burst forth.

"A victory will be given me this time," said Mocha Ruith. "Prepare my chariot, and let every warrior be at the side of his steed. And if the fire turn northwards let all pursue, and let delay be avoided; but if the wind turn south, shelter yourselves from your foes, and give them battle in the glens, passes, and fastnesses of the province." He brought a thick, gloomy cloud overhead, and drops of blood were falling from it, and he sung this poem:—

“A man in a mist, in a cloud's strength.

Let there be drops of blood on the grass !

Bruised will be hosts ; be there trembling on the race of Conn !

May each strength from the south be there.”

While he made the incantation, the shower of blood passed over Claire (the site of Cormac's camp), and thence to Teamur, and the hosts of Conn were dismayed.

There were then woods and extensive forests in middle Munster, and the two contending fires were contending above them, and Mocha asked, “How are the fires ?” They answered, “They are jostling one another along the mountain ridges, and down to Druim na Sail, and to the Sionan.” Again he asked, “How are the fires ?” and they answered, “They are as before, and they will not leave unburned tree or grass on the middle plain of Munster.” And that tract has been a plain ever since. Mocha Ruith again asked, “How are the fires ?” and they replied, “They have ascended to the firmament and the clouds of heaven, and they are like two powerful, robust heroes, or two fierce lions combating each other.”

Then was brought to Mocha his raw bull's hide, his bird-headed steed, and his enchanted dress, and he began urging the fire northwards, and he chanted a druidic spell, and Cithrua acted in the same way on the other part. But Mocha forced the fires northward, over Cormac's camp, and the power of Cithrua, and of his druids, and of his fairy host was at an end. Then did he marshal Cormac's host for retreat by battalions, and dispose the shield-bearers in the rear. The army of Leath Cuinn went homewards, for their druids would not allow them to stay and give battle, but they exhorted them to defend their lives like valiant men when assailed.

Mocha Ruith mounted his fair-covered chariot, to which were harnessed fierce, powerful oxen, with the speed of the March wind and of wings, with the raw bull's hide laid thereon. He went in front of the warriors, and he appointed Ceanvar to excite the men of Munster in the pursuit. When they came to Ard Cluain na Feinne (upland plain of the Fianna), they were even with the rear-guard of Leath Cuinn ; and they attacked them from the east and

the south, and they went through them, and across them, as dogs through a flock of sheep, and slew them as far as Magh-Nuachter (in Upper Ossory).

Here Mocha Ruith asked, though he was in front, "Who is before us here?" And well he knew. "There are three grey old men," replied they; "and those are Ceacht, Croda, and Cithrua." "My gods have promised me," said he, "that when I would overtake them, and blow my breath on them, they would become grey stones. So he blew a druidical breath on them, and they became stones; and it is these that are called *Leacha Raidhne* at this day.

From that place and that hour, Mocha became more arrogant and more powerful, and he did not allow them to stop till they reached Sliav Fuaid, where Fiacha's pavilion was erected; and to this day it is called *Pobla Fiacha* (Fiacha's people).

Leath Cuinn here offered such tribute hostages and rent as Leath Mocha might impose on them. Neither Mocha Ruith, nor Mocha Corb, nor Fiacha would accept it from them till they had been two months, two quarters, and two years in the north. Moreover, they would then receive no terms until Cormac himself should come to offer them at the house of Fiacha. And as Cormac was unable to defend himself, or to save his country from being wasted and plundered, he came and gave them rent and tribute.

Fiacha and his men arose, and they marched homewards; and nothing is told of their adventures till they reached Cnoc Raffan, the royal fort. After this, the men of Munster asked Mocha about the loss the north and south had suffered; and he uttered this poem:—

"Of the men of Munster were slain by magic arts,
 Five druids of Cormac who uttered charms on Leath Mocha.
 I made three shapely hounds to slay the valiant sheep;
 I made an eel under water to destroy Colpa and Lurga;
 I sent fires northwards into Leath Cuinn of hard swords;
 I reduced the children of Conn of the Hundred Fights,
 So that they possessed but the strength of a seemly woman.
 The battle was not won over Leath Cuinn by swords,
 But by bringing the end of life on their learned men.
 Of Cormac's army four hundred fierce giollas
 Were slain, fiercely fighting, between Formaoil and Raidhne.

Croda, Ceacht, Cithrua, of the plain,—
 Druids of the court of Conn *Cead Cathach*,
 Were overcome in the plains of Raidhne,
 And their seemly bodies converted to hard stone—
 Hard druidic stones standing like monuments—
 Upright dallans, to endure to the end of time.
 And this was the loss of Leath Cuinn, without gainsaying
 Warriors that perished by the sons of Oilioll Oluim.
 From the fort of Bellowing Oxen to far Sligo,
 No such feats were ever achieved in one day
 By Fians, of deeds of valour and bravery.”



THE TREACHERY OF CONLA.

AFTER these things, the chiefs of Leath Mocha departed from the royal fort of Cnoc Raffan to their several duns and lioses; and Cormac returned to Teamur, bringing with him Conla, son of Fiacha's uncle, whom by treaty he was to educate, and entertain at his court. Conla grew up, and learned the skill, and accomplishments, and duties of a *curadh*, and great was his fame through Erin, till he used violence towards a beauteous woman of the sighe of Loch Gabhar. She afterwards asked of him a boon, and she requested that he would enter the sighe where her people were; but he would not. “Then, at least, come opposite the mound, with your face turned towards it.” This he did; and while her tribe had their eyes on him, she told them his crime. “Wilt thou make her satisfaction?” said they; and his refusal was given. “Then,” said they, “you have abused our hospitality, and a blight shall you suffer while life endures.” They blew their breath on him, and a scurf of leprosy fell upon him—head, face, and body. He repented deeply in his soul for the wrong he had wrought, and thus returned to the palace of Cormac. Cormac looked at Conla and wept. “Why do you weep, Cormac?” asked Conla. “For the greatness of my grief,” replied Cormac, “that you should be in that state, and for my great love for you. Also it is by you I hoped to avenge my wounds on Fiacha, in defending the sovereignty of Munster for you.” “Have you heard of anything that

will cure this disorder?" asked Conla. "Though I have heard it," replied Cormac, "you could not get it." "What is it?" asked Conla. "The blood of a noble king," replied Cormac. "Who is he?" asked Conla. "Fiacha Muilleathan is the noble," replied Cormac; "but it would be treachery in you to kill him. However, if you were to procure it, it would relieve you." "I prefer the death of a friend," said Conla, "to be in this condition, were I but certain of the cure." Cormac swore an oath that it was true, and Conla said he would make the trial.

Conla thereupon went to Cnoc Raffan to the house of Fiacha. Fiacha was greatly grieved to see him in that condition. He bade him welcome and sought remedies. He gave him the third of his confidence, and Conla's bed was as high as Fiacha's, and it was he who brought and carried stories to and from him. They lived a long time thus, and he used to go in and out along with him, and Fiacha was often alone in his company; and so it was till they came one day to the bank of the Suire.

Here Fiacha prepared to bathe, and he threw off his clothes, and left his broad shining spear on the bank with Conla. Conla treacherously took up the spear, and thrust it through Fiacha, to where the wood and the bronze met. "Alas!" said Fiacha, "grievous to friendship is that deed, and at the instigation of foes has it been done. Bathe as you have been told, but it will avail you nothing, and pleasing to your foes will be this deed." And that was the cause of the death and the fate of Fiacha Muilleathan, King of Munster.

Where that deed was done was at *Ath Leathan* (ford of Leathan) which is now called *Ath Isiul* (Athassel; ford of treachery) from the foul deed of Conla. Conla derived no relief from his crime; and it was hunger and leprosy that caused his death, for none of the race of Eogan would allow him into their houses, scorning to revenge the deed in any other manner.

Our readers must not take in trust the evil that is here attributed to King Cormac. They may take for granted that he invaded Munster without reasonable cause, and suffered a deserved defeat; but they must acquit him of the treacherous advice given to Conla. The rhap-

sody was written by a poet of Leath Mocha, who showed no justice to the "natural enemies" of his half of the island. The original of the wild tale forms a portion of the *Book of Lismore*, which was discovered in a walled up niche of that castle during alterations in 1814. A valuable treatise in the book is that called "Agallamh na Seano-rach" (Dialogues of the Sages), a supposed conference between Cæilthe, Oisín, and St. Patrick. The two warriors having been preserved in life about 150 years beyond the natural span, gave the saint much curious information concerning various localities, and those who once dwelt in them. Had the Ossianic Society been well supported, and the officers been indued with courage, this and other valuable MSS. would have long since seen the light.

The tale is given in the abstract, and with many omissions, but the phraseology is fairly preserved.



THE DISPUTED CLAYMORE.

KING Cormac was assisted in his councils by Fithil, descendant of the wise and just Moran. King and councillor were worthy of each other, if Cormac corresponded to the description of his personal appearance preserved in the *Book of Ballymote*, as he attended at a feis in his palace of Tara.

"Magnificently did Cormac come to this great meeting ; for his equal in beauty had not appeared, excepting Co-naire, son of Etirscel or Conchobhar, son of Cathbadh, (King Conor) or Ænghus, son of the Daghdá. Splendid indeed was Cormac's appearance in that assembly. His flowing hair was slightly curled and of a golden hue. He had a red shield with engraved devices, golden hooks, and silver clasps. He wore a purple, wide-folding garment with a gem-set gold brooch at the breast ; a golden torque encircled his neck. He wore a white, cold-excluding shirt, with red embroidery. A golden girdle with gems of precious stones about him : two golden network sandals with buckles of gold adorned his feet. Two golden-socketted spears with rivets of bronze were in his hand. He was moreover shapely, fair, without stain or blemish. You would think that a shower of pearls had been shed in his mouth. His lips were like rubies. Whiter than snow was his fair shapely body. Like the mountain-ash berry on

Sein Sleibh were his cheeks. His eyes were like the sloe ; his eye-brows and eye-lashes like the glistening of a blue lance. Such then the form and appearance in which Cormac went to his great assembly."

The present tale has nothing to do with the monarch's public life or presidency in his parliaments. Like other wise rulers in troublous times he held hostages from his tributary kings, and among the rest, Socht, son of Fithil, son of Aenghus, son of—Adam. This Socht possessed a wonderful sword ; its hilt carved silver ; its ward pure gold. It would bear its point to be brought round to the hilt, and when freed, spring back like an ash bow. In the dark it flashed out light. It would cut a hair placed on the water ; it would sweep a hair from the head without touching it. It was suspected to be the *cruaidin coiditchearn* (battle steel) of Cuchulainn. It was an heirloom of Socht's family, of priceless value.

A noble at that time in Tara, Duibhrean, son of Uirgrean, saw this weapon, and coveted it. He asked Socht to give it him, and, in return, he and four of his following should be provided with the evening meal each future day of his life, and have, besides, his own award of its value. Socht declared that he could not think of selling for any consideration the heir-loom of his clan and family ; but Duibhrean ceased not to importune him for the weapon ; he could think or speak of nothing else. One evening when they were drinking together, the chief directed his attendant to ply his guest with the wine and the mead ; and he did this, and to such purpose, that Socht was overpowered, and heavy slumber fell on him. While this lasted, Duibhrean sent for the King's armourer, and said to him, "Essay to open the hilt of this sword." "I will not only try, but do it," said the artificer, and by the exercise of skill he had soon the carved silver haft laid open. On the hollow side of one of the pieces, he found engraved in the *oghuim*, "The sword of Socht, son of Fithil." On the other were cut some older characters, which the chief would not take the time to decipher. The artificer, by his order, set at work, and erased the inscription, and in its place he cut in the soft silver, "The sword of Duibhrean, son of Uirgrean."

The job being completed, they were proceeding to search out the sense of the other inscription, but Socht was beginning to move, and show signs of waking. So the armourer fastened the two portions of the hilt, and quitted the room, after receiving his award.

Next day Duibhrean again importuned Socht to part with his weapon, but he received the same answer as before; and then he called in witnesses, and thus spoke before them:—"In presence of these duine uasals, I demand of you, O Socht, son of Fithil, son of Ænghus, to deliver into my possession that bright, two-edged, silver-hafted sword, which belonged to my grandfather, and to my father after him, and then to myself, and of which I should have possession, but for your unjustly detaining it after its being demanded by me more than three times." "I call on the sun, the moon, and the winds to witness," said Socht, "that the sword has been in the possession of my ancestors for five generations, and I refuse to accede to your demand." "Then I summon you," said the other, "to appear to-morrow before Cormac, and Fithil, his chief brehon, and then and there to resign the sword to me, if I prove my claim to its ownership." "I will appear, and prove your claim to be without necessity or justice," said Socht.

Next day, Socht, son of Fithil, and Duibhrean, son of Uirgrean, attended in the Midchuarta of Tara before Cormac the Ard-Righ, Fithil, his chief brehon, and chiefs and ollamhs in great number, for all had seen the much-prized weapon, and all knew the chiefs between whom the contention lay. Duibhrean, adjuring the gods and the king's life that the bright weapon lying naked on the table beside its sheath had belonged to his ancestors, and now to himself, besought judgment to be made, and his precious heirloom restored to him. Fithil, receiving a sign from the king to examine into the rights of the contention, demanded of Socht if the claim made by his opponent was founded in justice. He denied it, and asserted that the sword had come to himself as fifth in regular descent, and had never been out of the possession of its lawful owners. Then the brehon, turning to the claimant, the following demands and replies ensued:—"When was the weapon last in the possession of

your ancestors or yourself?" "My father, Uirgorean, used the blade in seven battles, and in my youth it was stolen from our lios." "How do you recognise the weapon?" "By the length, the breadth, the silver hilt, the golden guard, and the patterns wrought on them." "The possessor, Socht's, word is set against yours; he is in possession, therefore the task of proof rests with you. What you have yet said is without weight; it is balanced by the defender's declaration." "Let the haft of the sword be opened, and if an inscription to the effect that it was my father's property and mine also, be not found within, I give up my claim." "Know you how to take the hilt asunder?" "Certainly; but it requires the skill of the artificer. If the royal armourer be summoned, I will give him directions." The armourer came, and seeming to receive instructions, he easily separated the two portions of the hilt, one of which remained fastened to the blade. These were laid before the brehon. He took up the loose portion, and said aloud, "There is inscribed within the cavity 'The sword of Duibh-rean, son of Uirgorean.' This seems to establish the right of the appellant. What have you to say, O Socht, the defender in this action?" "What I say is; by your hand and the hand of Cormac, I read on the same spot not six moons since, 'The sword of Socht, son of Fithil.' Allow me another look." It was granted, and his eyes opened wide in wonder and vexation. "Know you, O Duibh-rean," continued Fithil, "the corresponding writing within the other piece, and its drift," and he fixed his dark eyes sternly on the appellant. "I took no notice of any other than the one inscription, O learned Fithil." "Then I request you to read it now aloud in the hearing of all." He took the piece with a trembling hand, and appeared to examine the inscription. At last he said, "I am sorry to own want of skill to decipher this antique carving." "Then," said Socht, "at the risk of paying a heavy eric I shall tell its import. 'The blade of Cuchulainn, by which the life of Conn of the hundred battles was taken.'" "The eric thou shalt pay without doubt," said the king, "but still retain my esteem. As for you," said he to Duibh-rean, "you shall never more grasp weapon more noble than the tool of the craftsman or

the labourer, and your associate be degraded to the lowest office in the shealin of the swine herd."

To W. M. Hennessy, Esq., M.R.I.A., the able editor and translator of some of our valuable ancient chronicles, I owe the substance of this curious legend, as well as that of "Cliona of Munster."

KING CORMAC IN FAIRY LAND.

MANANAN was the brother of Fionula, see the "Four Swans," and, like other personages of this mythic race, seems to have been exempt from decay. At his apparent death he passed into the *sighe* condition. His full style and title was "*Mananan Mac Lir, Sighe na Cernac*,"—Mananan, son of Lear, Fairy Chief of the Headlands. His chief personal accompaniments and other properties were—the *crann bui* (yellow shaft—spear), the *moraltha* (large fierce one—sword), the *beagaltha* (small fierce one), the *Ga Dearg* (red javelin), his horse *Inbhear*, and his boat *curadh curuchain*. He made it his particular care to defeat the efforts of the foreign invaders, the Fomorach, or African pirates, and always aided the native heroes, whether Danaans or Milesians, in their patriotic efforts. Dairmuidh, the hero of the beauty spot, being obliged by geasa laid on him by Grainné to carry her away from her bridegroom, Fionn, overcame all that were sent against him by means of the irresistible arms of Mananan. His death, by the tooth and bristles of the boar of Ben Gulban in Sligo, was owing to his being armed on that disastrous day with the yellow-shafted instead of the red-shafted dart of Mac Lir.

In the tragic story of the "Children of Tuirrean" mention is again made of the arms of Mananan enabling the patriotic Lucha to destroy the Fomorian invaders. Here is the manner in which he acted towards King Cormac, reminding us of the Genius in *Zadig*, and the Angel in Parnell's *Hermit*.

When Cormac was standing at the gate of his palace of *Liathdruim* (Grey Ridge, Tara), he saw a beautiful youth

on the plain before him, playing with a glittering fairy branch with nine apples of gold growing on it. And the virtue of that branch was, that when he shook it, wounded men, and women in childbirth would feel no pain, and the man or woman sunk in grief would remember their sorrow no more. "That is a priceless article," said Cormac; "what do you require for it?" "Eithne, Cairbre, and Ailve—thy wife, thy son, and thy daughter," said the youth. "They are yours," said he, and he took the branch into the sunny chamber of the Rath, the grianan, and shook it before Eithne, Cairbre, and Ailve. "What hast thou given for that branch, O Cormac?" "The dearest things I have in the world—thymself and our children." Then they fell into grief and wailing, but he shook the branch again, and they went forth to meet the youth with happy minds.

When they were gone, and the people of the court heard it, they burst into loud lamentations, and the people of Erin thronged to Leathdruim, and wept aloud, and then Cormac came forth and shook the golden fruit, and a feeling of happiness came on the crowd within the halls, and the multitude that filled the plain, and they retired every one to his own rath.

So, when a day and a year were gone, Cormac went forth to seek his wife and his children, and he saw many strange things as he went, which he did not understand, and at last he came to a house in the middle of a field. He went in and found a tall man and woman sitting by the fire, and there were many colours in their clothes. "Sit down, O youth," said the woman, "and stay a day and night with us. And you, man of the house, if you have any kind of food better than another, bring it in."

So the man of the house went out, and returned with a boar on one shoulder and a log on the other. He laid them down, and divided them into four quarters each, and then said to Cormac, "put a quarter of the boar on a quarter of the log, and tell a true story, and it shall be cooked." "Tell the first story thymself," said Cormac; and he agreed. "That pig is one I have of seven, and when all his flesh is consumed I put his bones into the sty, and I find him alive in the morning." That was a true story, and the quarter of

the boar was cooked. Then the man of the house put another quarter of the log under another quarter of the boar, and said, "Bean a Tigh, tell a true story and let this be cooked." So she said, "I have seven cows, and these seven cows fill seven keaves every morning, and if all the men and women on the ridge of the world were in the plain, the seven keaves' milk would satisfy them all." That was a true story, and the second quarter was cooked. Then said Cormac, "Thou, O Man of the house, art Mananan, Son of Lear, and thou, O Woman of the house, art his wife." For it was to *Tir Tairngire* (Land of Promise) he came to seek that maid who owned the seven wonderful cows. "That is well said," said Mananan; "and now tell a true story thyself to cook the third quarter." "I will do that," said Cormac, and he said:—"It is a year since I gave a fair-haired youth my wife, my son, and my daughter, for a branch with golden fruit; and I am now seeking them through Erin." With that the third quarter was cooked.

"Eat now your dinner," said the man of the house. "I never eat," said Cormac, "with only two in company." "Then will I indulge you with three more," said Mananan; and he went into the next room, and returned with Eithne, Cairbre, and Ailve. There was much embracing, and crying, and laughing; and then Mananan spread a table-cloth, and set them at dinner. "That table-cloth is such," said Mananan, "that whoever sits at it, will find before him whatever food he wishes for." He then took a cup from his girdle, and said, "the virtues of this cup are such, that if a lying story is told before it, it will fall in four pieces, and when a true story is then told, the pieces will come together again." "Let that be proved," said Cormac. "It shall be done," said Mananan. "This woman that I brought from thee, has had another husband since." Then there were four pieces made of the goblet. "That is a falsehood," said the wife of Mananan. "These have seen no man or woman since they left Teamur but their three selves." That was a true story, and the pieces went together again.

"These gifts of yours are very precious things," said Cormac. "They shall be yours," said Mananan. "It was

I that appeared as the youth with the branch on the plain before Leathdruim, and I brought thee here to bind friendship with thee." Cormac and his family slept on noble couches that night; and when they awoke next morning it was in the bed-chambers of Teamur they found themselves; and the table-cloth, the goblet, and the branch with golden fruit, were with them. And from that time there is a saying in Erin—"As Cormac went in quest of his family."

Cormac's Later Years.

So Cormac's rule was long distinguished by wisdom and anxious wishes for the welfare of his subjects; but in order that his end should be happy, preparatory trials were sent as his life drew towards its term. He lost his prudent and affectionate wife, he lost his crown, or rather he was relieved of its burthen. Leaving cares of government to his son Cairbre, he retired to a thatched cottage near the Boyne; and as he had for a long time endeavoured to live in conformity to the dictates of natural religion, he was rewarded by receiving the light of Christian faith seven years before his death. These seven years were employed in contemplation and exercises of devotion, and in composing his "*Instructions for a young Prince (Cairbre, his son),*" still extant. The day before his death, a druid presented himself, bearing a magnificently attired idol, and requested the king to fall down and pay it suitable honours. Cormac refused of course, and endeavoured to open the benighted man's eyes to the folly of paying adoration to the work of man's hands. He only exasperated the idolater; and some accounts relate that he was choked by a fish bone on the evening of the same day, the druid having pronounced some devilish incantations over the fish while in the process of being broiled.

Not content with this death, the evil spirits would not allow the body the advantage of a quiet interment, as he had given directions that his remains should neither be laid in *Rilig na Righ*, the royal cemetery in Roscommon, nor in the Brugh of the Boyne among his own pagan ancestors. His trusty servants endeavoured to convey his body three times across the Boyne without success, for the waters rose

in wild waves, and spread far on either side over inches and woods. On the last occasion, the bier and coffin were swept down the river out of their hands, and were found some days afterwards at the place which thence obtained the name of *Ros na Righ* (promontory of the kings). There the interment was made, and there three hundred years later, was the skull of the monarch discovered by St. Colum-Cillé, who never afterwards omitted to remember in his prayers the soul of the wise King Cormac.

CLIONA OF MUNSTER.

The following legend had a claim for next place to that in which the Great Druid Mocha bore a part, but it did not seem expedient to separate the legends connected with the Great King.

To the great druid of Valentia and his wife were born two daughters—Cliona (lovely), who, as she grew up, possessed herself of all the occult knowledge of her father, and Aivil (all beautiful), who was more beautiful than *Aoine* (Venus) herself.

When it was time to think of a husband for the elder lady, who was no way distinguished for beauty, the parents turned their attention to a neighbouring young chief, the brave and princely looking Caomh (*pr.* Caev, pleasant). They invited him to pass some days at their *lios*, and in order that no obstacle should be in the way of the desired union, Aivil was sent away on a visit to the fort of a relative in Thomond.

The most cordial reception was given to the young chief, who became at once a favourite of the druid, and his lady, and their daughter, and every one of the family or following, by his unassuming manner, and his strength, and skill, and speed in the chase, and in the warlike exercises which occupied the *duine uasals* in their hours of leisure. Cliona loved him from the first hour in which she enjoyed his company; but great as were her mental endowments, she saw clearly enough that, however well disposed were his

feelings, they did not correspond to the fervour of hers towards him. She knew the power of philtres, but she also knew their evil, and the hatred which frequently follows the insane affection which they excite; so she forbore their use. The only sorcery she resorted to was that of intelligence, tender attention to the tastes and wishes of the guest, and that natural charm resulting from beauty of shape, grace of movement, and the pleasure which her eyes and lips ever expressed in their conversations. Caomh being up to that time heart-whole, would have soon returned the deep-seated love of Cliona, but it was otherwise decreed.

Having left the enclosed dun one evening to enjoy the green expanse of the neighbouring clearings, the sunshine, and the shade of the old forest-trees, the conversation became at every step more and more interesting, so interesting, indeed, that at last, as they sat on the trunk of a fallen tree, Cliona was expecting that the next words spoken by her companion would be a declaration of love. And so they would have been, but for the noise made by a party passing to the lios along the forest road. A sickness came over her at the sight of her beautiful sister approaching, seated in a chariot such as was in use sixteen hundred years since, and accompanied by many of gentle and simple rank on foot. A different effect was produced on Caomh, who from the moment he could get a clear view of her lovely features and lovely form, felt as if his heart had left his breast and flown to her. No less strong were the sensations of Aivil as her eyes took in the noble figure and manly beauty of Caomh.

Cliona, putting all the restraint in her power on her painful emotions, kindly received her sister, who had now descended from her car; and after a few words of ordinary greeting, asked her the cause of her so speedy return. "Have our friends," said she, "lost their character for hospitality, and allowed you to quit them so soon?" "No, no," said she, "I left them in the utmost sorrow and mortification. But from the first night I spent in their lios, I have been tormented with the most frightful dreams. Horrible creatures, of whose appearance I could give no account on waking, seemed as if they were seizing on different parts of soul and body, heart, brain, love of you and

our parents, such beauty as I have, everything most dear to me, even some most dear treasure which I seemed to understand and value beyond all things while subject to these horrible night trances, and of which I could form no distinct notion in my waking hours, but whose want was not the less painful. After three nights' sufferings I could endure it no more; and if our friends had not sent their sons and these stout youths to accompany me, I should have dared the perils of the journey alone."

In the lios there was great joy for the return of the amiable Aivil; but the pleasure it gave her parents was small compared with the mortification they felt on Cliona's account. They did not require more than a few hours' observation to be convinced that a strong mutual affection reigned in the hearts of the chief and their younger daughter. But powerless as the young creature felt herself to show indifference, or give a refusal, when Caomh revealed his love, and besought hers in return, she thus spoke: "Before I yield to this appeal, you must declare to me, on the word of a truthful *Curadh*, that you have not said similar things to my sister, and asked for a return." Though Caomh was not thoroughly blameless, in intention at least, his answer satisfied her, and she found it beyond her power to conceal her love. Few moments went by till the parents' consent was asked; and, however unwelcome was the turn things had taken, refusal could not be given.

The betrothed were too much engrossed with their abounding happiness to reflect that perhaps this happiness could be only matched in intensity by the anguish endured by Cliona. No one witnessed it but her nurse, whose love for her was that of a mother.

This nurse could scarcely have lived from her youth in the druid's family without having acquired some of his evil science. Seeing her beloved favourite in such a distracted state, she proposed a plan, which without inflicting any eventual evil on her sister, would remove all hindrances to her (Cliona's) marriage with the young chief, and thus they proceeded.

The nurse collected many herbs by moonlight, muttering appropriate charms the while. She boiled them in a bra-

zen vessel, burning a lock of Aivil's hair over it, and letting the ashes fall into the mixture. With the first opportunity which presented itself, a small portion of the beverage was given in some liquid to Aivil, and from the moment an illness, increasing from hour to hour, seized on her. Her surpassing loveliness faded, the outline of her beautiful form became rigid and angular, her strength departed, and despite Caomh's mighty sorrow, the sorrow of her parents, and that of all her people, and even the efforts of her father, aided by his occult skill, the earthly life of the sufferer came to a close. Her remains were laid in a stone chamber, a mound piled above, and a dallan inscribed with her name and descent in the Ogham character set up.

In the very night that succeeded her apparent death, the magic power of Cliona and her nurse was put in employment; the insensible body of the unfortunate lady was removed to the subterranean palace of Castlecór; a draught of power was given, at first drop by drop, but gradually increased till the blood began to flow, the lungs to breathe, and the limbs to move; and long before the dawn of day Aivil was as fair to look upon as when she first met the eyes of Caomh.

At first she was in great disquiet, arising from the change which she felt was taking place in herself, the strangeness of the place, and the anxious looks of her sister and the nurse. When Cliona felt that the proper moment was come, she related what had occurred, and by whose agency, and thus continued: "I blame you not for anything past, but I must consult my own happiness. I love Caomh as intensely as you, and cannot endure life without his love and his society. You shall enjoy lands and castles, nothing of earthly good shall you want; but you must swear by an oath which I shall tender to you, the least infraction of which will be followed by your destruction, that you will never give information of your existence to Caomh, nor take any step to weaken his love for me."

"The condition you propose," said Aivil, "I could not observe. Caomh's love and society are as needful to me as the air I breathe. Without them, life on the earth would be torture."

Cliona endeavoured to win her to consent, but in vain. At last she announced her resolution. "I love you as I ever did, but my own happiness is still dearer : if I leave you here in the possession of your human shape and faculties, some unexpected chance may disappoint my plans. With this wand, the most powerful of all Mogha Ruith's instruments, I will change your appearance to that of the fairest to look on of animals. Nothing but a touch of the same wand may ever again restore you to the shape you now enjoy. Here all your wants shall be looked to, and suitable attendance you shall never need. Whenever you feel inclined to comply with my desire, you have only to form the resolve in your mind, I shall be presently with you, and the lovely shape, and the enjoyment of the upper world, shall be yours again." She touched her with the wand, and a white cat, the most beautiful that ever appeared to the human eyes, stood in her place.

Tears fell from her eyes like rain as she caressed the beautiful animal, nor were her endearments repelled.

Cliona's first cares on her return were now directed to console the bereaved Caomh. Next day there was no appearance of Mogha nor the lady of the dun at the plentiful table where the household took their food. They found that a disease of weakness had seized on them, and that the sharp and heavy sorrow for their daughter's loss was beyond their force to overcome. From their beds they never rose again, and no sleep came on Cliona's eyes while their illness endured. Caomh did not quit the dun while life held, and his sympathy with the suffering daughter consoled and strengthened her in her watches. She might perhaps have still preserved their lives for years of happiness by releasing her sister, but Cliona was a pagan and sorceress, and she would give up her own life rather than the hope of one day securing the love of Caomh.

So death again visited the household, and the solemn ceremonies of the interment were performed, the lamentations sung, and the mound raised over the mighty druid and his wife, and Cliona, left alone in her grianan to bewail her losses, but not all alone. When Caomh hinted at his departure, he beheld such woe in her face and attitude that

he stayed on, and, notwithstanding his own desolation, he comforted her as he could. In her features, though much less beautiful than those of his lost treasure, in her accents, and in her movements, there was much that recalled the presence of the all-lovely Aivil, and an ill-understood influence kept him still by the side of Cliona. However, months and months went by before his feelings towards her became undivided love. The change at last arrived, and Cliona was as happy as a woman could be.

On the eve of her marriage-day, she determined that she would, if it were consistent with her own well-being, impart what happiness she could to her ill-fated sister. She restored her for the moment to her human form, tenderly embraced her, and proposed liberty and the light and joy of upper air on the former terms ; but neither her beauty, nor her health, nor her all-engrossing love, had suffered any change during her enchantment ; and she would not make promise nor take oath, and they parted again in sadness.

So Cliona's happiness was at last secured, and never was man blessed with a more judicious, loving, and devoted wife. Once every year she visited the sighe palace of Castlecor, and earnestly endeavoured to change her sister's resolve ; but it remained as it had been from the beginning.

Three daughters were sent to gladden the home of the happy pair, and the features of all, some more strongly than the rest, recalled to their fond father the sweet countenance of the lost Aivil.

For more causes than we have room to explain, the demeanour of the happy wife and mother gradually changed to her nurse, her former evil agent. She was not, indeed, unkind nor harsh ; but all tenderness and attachment ceased, and the wicked hag was now afflicted with an illness which was to death. She seized a chance opportunity of securing the rod of power, and having kindled a fire, the flames of which were fed with magic ingredients, she consumed it, till its ashes could not be distinguished from those of the materials used in its destruction.

As Caomh and Cliona were one day agreeably conversing on the sunny slope of the mound which guarded their dun, and their children were chasing each other in frolicsome

glee, a message came from the nurse, praying her master to visit her in her last hour, as she had information to give, intended for his ears alone. He asked, might not his wife accompany him; but a denial was given. He proceeded to the room of the old woman, and the moment of his entrance into the building, Cliona sought her secret apartment, and found the rod of power gone. Swiftly she had her chariot harnessed, and taking her daughters with her, she bade the attendants who were present to acquaint her lord when he came out, that she and the children had driven to Carrig Cliona.

He soon came forth, but it would seem as if a score of years had passed over his head since he had entered the house. On receiving the information, he proceeded to the dun named by his wife. If she had entertained any design to screen herself from his resentment, the air of deeply-seated wretchedness which hung about him soon changed her purpose. She made no defence but threw herself at his feet in agony. "Words are useless," said he. "First of all, free your innocent and hapless sister from the spell under which she lies. Place her where she wills. I shall never lay eyes on her while you live. All the love of which my heart is capable has been yours for years and years." "Alas, my dear lord!" said she, "it is beyond my skill to do so. The unhappy wretch who so well worked out my wishes, destroyed the fatal wand in which lay the power of disenchantment. In revealing the wickedness of me and of herself, she took care to leave that evil deed unmentioned." "The same roof," said he, "shall never again shelter our heads. Restore my children, and never again come where I am. My affection for you shall end only with my life; but she who has lost my esteem shall never more share my bed."

She brought forth the children, and suffered more than the pangs of death in parting from them, and from him whom she could never cease to love and obey.

The poor children did not see many melancholy days pass over their heads before their father was released from earthly sufferings. They were then removed to the dun of their grandfather at Cullin, and never after allowed to look

on the face of their wicked and unhappy mother. Till her mortal course ended, and till she passed into the *sighe* state, she dwelt with her sister in the subterranean palace at Castlecór, and bestowed all the loving cares in her power on her. When freed from her mortal condition, her nature suffered a malevolent change, and never at the hearth of peasant or farmer has there been related a kind deed done to mortal by the queen of Munster fairies, Cliona, daughter of Mogha Ruith.

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A few miles south of Mallow, stands an upland circular platform of smooth turf, two acres in extent, in the centre a tolerably large isolated rock, and some smaller ones placed at points in the circumference. This is Cliona's domain, the central rock is her castle, and he is a strong-minded peasant who dares to cross the enchanted enclosure during the hours of night.

The entrance to the cavern at Castlecór has been closed. This cavern lies within a hillock crowned with trees, and till the entrance was stopped, many tales were current of adventurers, who after clearing a chasm twenty-five feet wide, were admitted into the richly-furnished interior, and had interviews with the resident white cat. Such as comported themselves with modesty and moderation in their desire of treasures, were sent away well furnished with gold and jewels. One room filled with precious things was in open view, but the entrance was forbidden by the fair guardian. If her desire was not attended to, a *Sighe-gaoithe* swept the covetous wretch out, the breadth of whole fields, from the palace, and when he awoke to consciousness he found hands and pockets empty. Some tellers of the legend, ignoring the pagan practices of the characters of the legend, and the many centuries since they were creatures of flesh and blood, would tell that if any eligible suitor could find his way to Aivil's chamber, and love her for her own sake, and without reference to her riches, she might once more enjoy human happiness in air and sunlight; but we look on this circumstance as an excrescence on the early form of the legend.

THE FIRST LAP-DOG THAT CAME TO ERINN.

IN the days of Cormac there lived in Erinn a young chief endowed with all the qualities to make him respected in council, dreaded in battle, and loved by his family and his tribe. But no one is perfect; and Carril's weak point was an excessive liking for dogs of every species, from the noble hound that chased wolf and stag to the serviceable house-dog, and him that assisted the shepherd. He could hardly be approached in his ordinary walks and excursions, for the number of these animals of every rank that barked and frolicked about him; and when he passed the *bruighin* (farm house) or the shealin, the animals in kitchen and yard would spring out, make their way through their sometimes snarling fellows till they would receive kind words and caresses from the young chief. Then, after executing some gambols round him, and at times having a snap or snarl with some unharmonious spirit in the throng, or renewing old compacts with others, by snuffing, cocking ears, or smelling, they would retire satisfied to their posts.

One time a young duine uasal, a distant relative of his family, and whose tribe was settled in Alba, came to attend a famous school which was held in the neighbourhood of the dun in which our young dog-patron spent his happy and active life. The new-comer took up his abode with his relatives, and though more devoted to the study of old parchments than to wild sports, he occasionally accompanied the young flaith on his excursions. Once on their return to the dun, after a long hunt, the discourse, as in nine instances out of every ten, turned upon dogs, and the chief expressed his feelings in these words, uttered for behoof of his mother and two fair young sisters—

“My dear mother, while I am gratified with the attachment shown to me by my dogs of every description, and the sincere caresses they are never tired of bestowing on me, I feel that my enjoyment is not complete, for neither the wolf nor stag-hound, nor sheep-dog, nor terrier, nor house-dog, is fitted by size or comeliness to spring into the laps of yourself or my sisters. Now, if there was only a race of animals the size of the cat, with long silky hair and

long ears, and finely formed limbs, my domestic enjoyment would be complete to see one in each of your laps, while my own rougher, but perhaps more devoted followers, with their necks on my thighs, and their eyes fixed on my face, seem to enjoy all the happiness of which they are capable."

Then said the student: "You are in a fair way to have your wishes gratified. At my father's in Alba, is such a dog at this moment, the delight of the whole family; though for my part I would prefer the company of that rough-coated, sharp-eared sheep-dog between your legs. She and her companion were lately brought in a ship from Gaul. Such has never been seen in our country before."

"I vow," said the young chief, "that to-morrow's sun shall see me on my way to your father's fort, and if I return without a pair of the lovely breed to Erin, I will give you leave to call me an amadhān!"

"Oh, you need not take such trouble," said the student. "It will be a great pleasure to me on my return, to send a pair of these animals of the lap to my kinswomen."

The chief was not master of his besetting impulses. Next day saw him on board ship, attended only by six of his favourites, and a giolla, and next day saw him at the house of his relatives in Alba, all the household vying with each other in giving him welcome; his own dogs, and all those of the household, striving with each other for a seat next him before the huge fire in the hall, and the long-eared, silken-haired lap-dog on his knees. A great damp was flung on his spirits by the news that her mate had been accidentally killed on the previous day. Many an envious glance was cast on the little pampered animal by house, and sheep, and wolf-dog that evening, and their whinings repaid by many a selfish and ill-natured snarl. The daughter of the house fancied she had never seen so well formed or well favoured a young *gaisca*; but though he paid her all the attention he could spare from his rough and smooth-coated favourites, she thought within herself, "If all the men of Erin pay as little attention to the women as our guest, I pity their wives and daughters."

Next day the visitor took an opportunity of asking, in persuasive accents, the gift of the much-coveted *Leanan*.

"Do not press your request, good cousin," said the master of the house; "my wife and myself value the race of dogs nearly as much as you do. There is of her kind but herself in Britain. She will soon give birth to a litter; and by your hand you shall have a pair. Stay with us; hunt, and course, and fish, till they are fit for removal."

"I would be dead of impatience by that time. Give me instant possession of the darling Leanan, and my hand to you, I shall cross the sea of Moyle again with a pair of her young, in seasonable time."

"No, dear cousin and guest; take all my cattle; take cloaks, shields, gorgets of gold and silver, as much as you will; take Eimer to wife if you fancy her; but Leanan I cannot part with."

More entreaties, more and more fervent, more and more decided refusals, and at last the subject was dropped.

When retiring to rest, the Bhan a Tigh wondered to see Leanan, instead of waiting on her own steps, cling close to the visitor. Vain were her callings and expostulations: she would not quit him, and howled dismally when she took her from him. At last, at the request of Eimer, she gave her liberty, and she followed the young guest to his sleeping apartment. Next morning, after the forenoon meal of cakes, and broiled meat, and trout, and sorrel, and diluted mead, Carril, taking his dagger by the point, presented the handle to the astonished eyes of the *Fear a tigh* (Man of the house), and asked his opinion of its condition. "I think," said he, "it shows the finest taste, and the greatest skill in the carving of the wood, and the finest ornamentation in precious stones and gold, but what has caused it to be defiled with grease, and the carving defaced as if by some animal's gnawing?" "This has been done under your roof; what recompense do you award me?" "If the injury has been done by man or woman, a suitable eric shall be paid; if by a brute, it shall be at your option to kill it, or take it as your property, for so it is laid down in the Senchus,—'Every beast for its damage.'" "I am satisfied with your decision. My dagger fell on the floor in the night, and the handle dropped into a piece of some stuff palatable to the little animal, whose delight is to be in the

lap of its mistress. In licking it she has disfigured the richly-carved haft of my skian, and by your own decision she is now at my discretion. I sail for Erin this day ; every minute is an hour till Leanan is in my mother's lap ; but you shall see me again as soon as I can restore two for the one taken."

Carril left sorrow behind him. The father and mother mourned the little animal ; the daughter was sad for the departure of her negligent relative. But in three months' time he was with them again, his giolla bearing in a straw basket two of the nicest little animals that ever rejoiced the eyes of queen or chieftainess. The life and sprightliness which had fled from the sweet countenance of the young maiden now returned. Carril bestowed some attention still on his old favourites, but much more on the fair young heiress of the dun, and when he set foot again on his native land he was not alone. Thus was a fair bride brought from Alba, and thus was the first lap-dog brought to the land of the Gael.

Matter of fact chroniclers, whose information can never be so extensive or accurate as that of legend-finders, assert that Cairbre Musc, son of Sarah (Cormac's aunt and daughter of Conn of the Battles), and in time chief of Muskerry in Munster, was the fortunate individual who by a similar artifice, brought the useless and peevish little animal from Cornwall. We once had the advantage of hearing in the Royal Irish Academy a lecture on the interrelations of the common law of England and our own old legal code, delivered by a gentleman who combines in his own person, the best qualities of a Brehon and a Filea (councillor and poet). In the discourse came out the anecdote of the ruse of the chief above named. As national story-teller, we take precedence of historian or ollav, and in that capacity, commend our own version to our readers and the public.

The following is a quasi-historical legend connected with the origin of the great stone fortress on the western shore of Lough Foyle.

THE ORIGIN OF AILEACH.

A PROVINCIAL king and queen once visited the palace of the Ard Righ at Teamur, and were hospitably entertained. During their stay, this king began to suspect that the son

of the King of Ireland had induced his wife to forget her love and duty. Coming on the guilty pair unexpectedly while she seemed to be receiving his addresses with anything but resentment, he drew his sword, rushed on his betrayer, and after a short struggle, left him lifeless. In other cases of this kind the wronged husband would have only had to pay an eric, greater or less; but this slaying had taken place within the precincts of the regal fort. Councilors and nobles alike insisted that the homicide was worthy of death, but the bereaved father would not consent. "The young man," said he, "was guilty of a heinous crime committed against his father's guests, and deserved his fate. Still, the outraged man should have respected the inviolable character of his sovereign's abode. Let him, therefore, take the corpse on his back, and carry it where he wills, until he shall have found a suitable tombstone; and in that spot let him make the interment. The order was executed, and the unfortunate man, bearing the noisome load went forth, and searched, and still went on, till he came to the north-east of Tirconaill (Donegal). There, when he was on the point of expiring from fatigue and sorrow, he discovered a strong flag of the very size and fashion of a funeral stone. Having by a supreme effort succeeded in performing the enjoined duty, he lay down on the fatal spot, and breathed his last. A mighty fortress was afterwards raised round this tomb, and called from the circumstance related, the "Stone Fort of Groans" (Aileach). It was the greatest stronghold of the Clann Conaill for centuries.

A historical fact having some circumstances in common with this legend, is connected with Cormac's court. This monarch at the intercession of his uncle Aongus, forgave a person who had been for a long time in disgrace, and received him at Tara. But this proceeding was so displeasing to Ceallach, a hot-blooded son of the king, that he seized on the forgiven man, and put out his eyes. Aongus was so exasperated by this act of treachery, that coming up with the prince, he struck him dead with his lance though in his father's presence. He and his brothers barely escaping with their lives, betook themselves to their brother-in-law, Oilíoll Olúim, King of Munster, who gave them possession of the district ever since called the Desies.

We shall not here presume to decide on the existence or non-exis-

tence of the redoubtable body of heroes, the *Fianna Eirionn*, who are said to have flourished in the reign of Cormac and his son and successor Cairbre, and whose deeds have been sung by so many bards. Their great chief Fionn is certainly a historical personage. They are represented as a sort of standing army, which watched the coasts, and prevented invaders from making lodgments in the island. They were quartered during the winter on the inhabitants, and supported themselves during summer and autumn by hunting and fishing. On the Hill of Allen in Kildare was reared the great fortress of Fionn, for whose parentage and youth, as well as the destruction of his greatest champions at Gavra (Garristown) in Meath, in the reign of Cairbre, A.D. 294, see *Legendary Fictions of the Irish Celts*. The death of Fionn is thus noted under the year A.D. 273, by Tighernach, the most trustworthy of our ancient chroniclers.

"Finn O'Baisene was beheaded by Aiclech Mac Duibdren and the sons of Uirgren of the Luainé of *Temrach* (Tara) at Ath Brea on the Boyne." The death of Cuchulainn is recorded by the same historian, under the date A.D. 2.

The few Ossianic tales for which we can afford space were the compositions of different bards and story tellers who preserved the characters of the chiefs well enough but varied in some details.



AN BRUIGHEAN CAORTHAIN (THE QUICK-BEAM FORT).

COLGAN of hard weapons, son of Datchain, King of Lochlann (Scandinavia), *on a day of the days* convened a meeting of his nobles, chiefs, and distinguished subjects on the very wide, green plain where fairs and public meetings were wont to be held.

All being assembled, he asked in a loud, clear voice, if they approved his mode of governing them; and they answered, as with one voice, that they did. "I am called King of Erinn, and the people of that island do not own me as their sovereign, nor pay me tribute. Is it your will that we should invade that country where King Balor, and Ceiltean of intemperate teeth, his wife, his son Breas, and his daughters Niav and Finndealv, and many others of our noble people have perished?" "We will it," cried they all, and the meeting broke up, and swift runners went through Lochlann, and collected the stores, the ships, and the warriors.

Then went over the sea to Erin, these stern, heroic men in ships of large hulls, and in fast-sailing barks, and they came to land in a bay of Uladh. Cormac, son of Art, son of Conn of the Hundred Battles, received the tidings from a swift runner, and he delayed not till another, fleet of limb, went southwards like the wind. He was soon in presence of Fionn, son of Cumhall, as he sat at the board in the wide hall of Almuin.

"Fionn, son of Cumhall," said he, "Cormac, Ard Righ of Erin, greets you, and informs you that Colgan, son of Dathchain, King of Lochlann, at the head of warriors without number, has landed in Uladh, and is advancing on Teamur in swift marches." Fion left the hall, stood on his highest rampart, sounded his wild war bugle, and the plain was soon covered with the seven battalions of the Fianna.

The third day from this broke on Erin, and the Fians of Leinster, of Munster, and of Conacht, were engaged in deadly conflict with the men of Lochlann. Colgan and his valiant eldest son laid many of the Clann Baoisgne low, but both perished in turn by the invincible glaive of Osgur, son of Oisin, son of Fionn. So would have perished Mogach youngest son of Colgan, but he asked for life, and this boon was never refused by a Fian of Erin.

This youth was brought up at Fionn's board, and Fionn's side was his place at all huntings and entertainments. But for this preference, Conan the Bald one day reproached the chief in a council of the chiefs, and these were his words:—"Fionn the father, and brother, and the countrymen of Mogach have perished by your hands and those of your warriors; yet is he ever found by your side and at your right hand. You are cherishing a young wolf who will one day rend those dearest to you limb from limb." "But what can be done? I have given him bread and salt at my table. We must not do a positive cruelty to guard against an uncertain treachery." Send the youth, O son of Cumhall, to a far off portion of Erin, whence if he devises harm, it must come to you in open battle and conflict." All the warriors commended the thoughts of Conan, and Mogach became chief, at his own request, of a tract near the Sionan's mouth, and another called the territory of the great men

(*Firmhor*, Corkaguinny), and these he selected because of their commodious harbours, for there might be concealed the king of the world (Emperor of Rome?) and his forces, and Fionn none the wiser.

There for fourteen years lived Mogach, and he collected riches in abundance, yet not once in the whole time did he invite his protector to feast or hunt, and when any chiefs of the seven battalions of Almhuin passed that way, he never flung open his gates, nor invited them to the washing of feet, nor to a seat at his table.

One day as Fionn was pursuing the wild deer, he sat on the brow of *Cnoc Firinne* (Hill of Truth), and while seated, he saw a youth of heroic mien approach him. A transparent hood was on his head beneath his four ridged helmet, and from his shoulders fell a many-coloured silken cloak, fastened at his neck by a brooch of wide branches. By his side hung a sharp-cutting glaive. Two bright spears were in his right hand, and on his left arm was strung his glittering shield. "What is your news, young chief?" said Fionn. "News I have none. I am a maker of verses, and have brought one to offer to you." "I think you a man rather of *riots than rhymes* (a pun here in the original), and better used to do heroic feats than to sing them." "By your hand, I am merely what I say; will it please you to listen to my verses?" "Not here. Come to me in any palace in Erin, and if your verses are worthy, you shall name your own reward." "I will not enter any of your palaces, and if you do not listen to me here, I will lay you under *geasa* of performing acts repugnant to heroes." "Then repeat your rhymes," said Fionn, and the young poet said many,—scarcely worthy of the reader's attention.

"And now," said Fionn, "O, poet of worry and perseverance, what is your name, and what your tribe?" "Bad it is, O Fionn," said Conan, "that you cannot distinguish your friends from your foes. He is Mogach, son of Colgan, King of Lochlann, and to destroy you and us is his design. For fourteen years he has afforded neither meat, drink, nor lodging to hero or hireling of your people." "That is no fault of mine," said Mogach. "Every month of that time have I had a dinner prepared, but sent no invitation; for is

it not ordained that chief or king desirous to be entertained, should himself make the request? I have two habitations—one on the mainland, one on an island; and I lay you under geasa that you come and share the feast that I have prepared in my Quick-beam Court on the mainland.” He then took himself away.

So Fionn and certain of his heroes went, and Oisín remained in the same place where they then were, with those of his companions, that is to say, Faha, grandson to Conn, Diarmuidh O’Duiné, Fiachna, son of Fionn, and Innse, son of Suivné Seilgé. Those who departed with Fionn, were—Goll, son of Morna, Dathcaoin Deinma, Lucha of the Red Hand, Glas, son of Aon Ceirde, two of the chiefs of Leinster, two of the chiefs of Conacht, the swift-footed Coir Cead Gunorach, and the bald-headed Conan.

Conan the mistrustful first entered the quick-beam court, and was surprised to find no living being within. In the centre was burning a large smokeless fire, and the smell that came from it was the sweetest he ever got. Round the walls ran a raised seat, covered with rich cloths and many-hued silks, and the wainscotting was of fine smooth boards, of different colours, no one being like that at either side of it. After some time Fionn said, “It is strange that we should be left so long without appearance of Mogach, or attendant, or feast.” “It is also strange,” said Goll, “that the smokeless fire which gave so sweet a perfume at first, should now produce a smell as if all the evil weeds of the land were burning. Never before did I see a fire producing such a body of smoke.” “Strange is it, too,” said Glas, “that the walls which were so smooth and so varied in colour, should now be only rough boards secured with quick-beam twigs.” “It is as wonderful,” said Faolan, son of Aodh Beg, “that instead of the seven large carved doors that admitted us, there is none now to be seen but one low and narrow.” “Most strange, and most unpleasant of all,” said Conan Maol, “is it that our rich warm seats are now but coarse canvas, and as cold as the frozen water.” “It is a disgrace to me,” said Fionn, “to be a guest in a house secured by quick-beam withes. Let us destroy it.” “Certainly,” said Conan, and pressing the blunt end of his spear

against the ground, he attempted to spring lightly on his feet. So did all the heroes, but they found themselves as fast secured to the long seat, as if seat and bodies were the same substance. "Treachery, treachery!" said Conan. "Place your thumb between your lips, O Fionn, and give us true prophecy."

Fionn did as asked, and sad and sorrowful were his looks. "Alas!" said he, "for fourteen years has the King of Lochlann's son been preparing this snare. In his island fortress is now the King of the World, the Senior of Battles, with six kings at his command, and every king rules six battalions; and there are also in that fortress the three Kings of the islands of the floods and the dragons. And it is by the sorcery of these last three that we are secured; and there is nothing to release us but their own blood. A band of warriors under the command of Borb, son of the Senior of Battles, will be shortly here to put us to death." "Sound the *dhordfion*," said Conan, "that our friends, if near, may know our peril."

When Oisín had become weary with waiting, he despatched Fiachna, son of Fionn, and Innse, son of Suivne of the Chase, to the quick-beam court, to see how it fared with the chief and his companions. As they approached they heard the sound of the war-bugle, and they knew Fionn was in danger. "How fares it with my father?" cried Fiachna. "Very ill," was the reply. "We are here powerless by enchantment. Our enemies, countless as the sands, are in the island fort, and a detachment is coming to slay us. Who is in your company?" "Your foster son, Innse of the Chase." "Let Innse depart in safety, but you hasten to the pass of the ford, and defend it till aid comes at dawn." "Let my right hand wither!" said Innse, "if I desert my chief and foster father in his need. Fiachna and myself will do what skill and valour can."

As they came to the pass, said Fiachna, "I will proceed to the island to see the state and the strength of the foe. You guard the pass." Innse was not long on his post when he perceived a Grecian chief approaching at the head of fifty men. "What seek you?" said he. "We go to fetch the head of Fionn, son of Cumhall, to lay it at the feet of the

king of the world. And who of the noble or ignoble people of the earth are you, standing there with arms and armour?" "I am Innse of the Chase, foster son of Fionn, son of Cumhall, and if you attempt to cross the ford your flesh shall be a feast for the wolves and ravens."

Then rushed onwards the soldiers; and as corn before the reaper, so fell their bodies before the keen-cutting glaive of Innse, till not a man remained in life except their chief. Now came he on in strength and fury, and after a stern struggle, Innse, exhausted by wielding his heavy arms, and weakened with wounds, was felled to the earth, and his noble head severed from his white and powerful body.

Fiachna, returning from his quest, met the Grecian chief bearing the head of Innse. "Whose is that trophy you bear?" said he. "It is the head of Innse, foster son of Fionn, chief of the warriors of Erin. He slew fifty of my warriors, but perished by my hand. I am going to lay it at the feet of the king of the world." "Yours or mine must bear it company," said Fiachna, and with his heavy glaive he struck his foeman on the helm, and brought him to his knee. Furious but short was the deadly struggle, and when it ceased Fiachna was bearing two heads as he passed to the ford. There, finding the body of Innse, he made a grave, and many times kissing the head of his foster brother, and shedding bitter tears, he laid both it and the body in the grave, and covered it with tender care.

He approached the castle, and many were the questions and answers that followed. Fionn sorely bewailed the fate of his foster son, and blessed the brave Fiachna for avenging his death. "Go now, my son," said he, "and, while strength is left you, defend the pass till succour comes."

In the island, Mogach became anxious about the fate of the fifty that had gone towards the quick-beam castle. Taking sweets and fine meats to torment Conan the Greedy before putting all to death, he came with fifty men to the ford; and dismay fell on his heart when he beheld the pile of dead warriors. "Who are you? and who were these warriors when life was in their veins, and arms in their hands." "I am Fiachna, son of Fionn, and these the allies of the treacherous Mogach, prince of Lochlann. Send for-

ward your soldiers till their slain corpses enlarge the pile !” Onwards came the fighting men of Lochlann, and Fiachna rushed through them, and over them, and under them, as a wolf through a flock of sheep, or a hawk through a flight of small birds, till there was not a man of the fifty on whom the doom of desolation had not come. Then came, in fresh arms and in untired strength, Mogach, and fell on Fiachna, who returned blow for blow, and reply to the demand, though weak with fatigue and much loss of blood.

Oisin remained still on the Hill of Truth, and was surprised that Fiachna and Innse had not returned. “I go,” said Diarmuidh of the *Ball Seirce* (beauty spot), “to find out what has happened ; perhaps the feast is too delicious for them to quit it.” “I go with you,” said Faha, grandson of Conn. When they drew near the ford they heard the clang of the glaives on the helms, and shields, and loricas of Fiachna and Mogach, and the groans of the dying warriors. “That is the war-shout of Fiachna,” said Diarmuidh ; “weak and faint it seems.” On they ran, and there, on the farther side, was Fiachna, beaten behind his shield. “Thousand woes !” said Diarmuidh ; “If I cross this heap he will be slain before my sword reach his foe. If I cast my spear, it is he, perhaps, whom it will pierce.” “Never yet,” said Faha, “did you cast the lance in vain.” Swifter than the wind it went whistling, and the length of a warrior’s arm beyond the body of Mogach it went, first breaking the buckler and the strong coat of mail.

Though the shades of death were on his eyes, and the force failing from his arm, with a final thrust he freed the soul of Fiachna, and in the next moment his own head was shorn from his shoulders by the blade of the son of Duine, as a tuft of dry grass by the scythe of the mower. “Had I found you dead,” said Diarmuidh, “when I crossed the ford, your head and body should not have been separated. Now I take your head to Fionn as eric for the death of his son.”

Leaving Faha to watch the pass, he hastened to the quick-beam castle, and called out to the curai to let him in. “That is the voice of Diarmuidh,” said Fionn. “Alas, alas ! we cannot stir from our seats. What were those cries and

that clang of arms that have been coming to our ears.” “They were the cries of the foes of Erin that have fallen by the strong arm of Fiachna; but your noble son lies on his shield, lifeless.” “*Mo chuma!* my noble son! Who has taken his life? Is his slayer still under arms, and what name does he bear?” “Mogach, son of Colgan, was he called. His lifeless body lies at the ford. I bear his head by the long golden locks.” “Many times have you done me a service, O son of Duine! This, your last, is the greatest. Continue to watch till dawn till our people arrive, O Diarmuidh. We are as powerless as cailleachs spinning in the sun.”

“Great is my misery, O Diarmuidh,” cried Conan. “Cold as the coldest icicle is my body. My hunger is as that of the famished wolf; still more unbearable is my thirst. Rich are the meats and delicious the drinks at the tables of the kings in the island fortress. I lay you under obligations, O Diarmuidh, to bring me thence food and drink.” “Misfortune on the tongue that said the wish?” said Diarmuidh. “Are the chiefs of the Clann Baoisgne and the Clann Morna to be left at the mercy of their foes, while I seek in peril food and drink for Conan the Bald?” “Ah, son of Duine, if a dark or golden-haired young maiden had made the request, no complaint would be heard.” “I go; but if evil befall the Fianna, may your grave be left without dallan or cromlech!” As he passed the ford, and mentioned his errand to Faha, “By the hand of Fionn,” said he, “I would not like to imperil so many lives to satisfy foul-mouthed Conan’s appetite. Take him food and drink from this store brought by Mogach.” “If I did,” said Diarmuidh, “he would say it was the refuse of the common fighting men; and though I would easily survive a stroke of his sword, I dread his evil tongue.”

So he passed on, and entered the hall where the King of the World and his son Borb sat at table. Carrying his naked glaive under his left arm, he advanced to the table; and taking bread, and meat, and a flagon of mead from off it, he turned and quitted the hall. Eyes of warriors and common fighting men glared on him. But the master of the feast made no signal of offence, nor spoke word. Re-

turning by the ford, he found Faha asleep, but without waking him he passed on to the quick-beam castle, and cried, "Here is food and drink, O Conan. The door is firmly closed; how shall I convey it to you?" "None of the Clann Baoisgne equals Diarmuidh in strength and agility," said Conan, "except Oscar, son of Oisín. It would be to his disgrace to seek from anyone help or advice."

Diarmuidh stepped back to the ford, and returning with a war-mace on his shoulder, with a powerful sweep he struck the thick wall of mighty planks, opposite the head of Conan. A heavy splinter from the strong boards dashing against his head, caused him to utter such a cry as shook the building. "Take, O Conan," said Diarmuidh, "the provisions. May you get from them the full benefit you deserve." He then returned to the ford where Faha still slept.

By this time the Kings of the Islands of the Floods had learned the fate of Mogach, whom they blamed for having gone to the quick-beam castle. *They* had brought the enchantment on the Curai, and *they* only should be allowed to come and slay them. They now proceeded to the ford, each leading fifty men; and there, mighty in stature, and terrible in arms and armour, stood the heroic son of Duine. "Art thou Diarmuidh of the Beauty Spot?" said the kings. "Be certain of it," said he. "That gladdens us," they replied. "You and we received our military education at the same college. No secret of fight or management of arms known by one is unknown to the others. By our former brotherhood in arms we request you to stand aside, nor bar our march to the quick-beam castle." "Evil you intend Fionn, and Goll, and the rest; so here I remain to oppose you while I can wield spear, glaive, and buckler. At dawn my duty ceases, for then four battalions of the Fionn will be on the plain." "Perish in your rashness!" cried the Kings of the Islands of the Floods, and the rush was as that of wild boars, or wolves, or furious stags. Vain was their strength and fury. Invulnerable he stood; and arms, heads, and limbs, were lopped away, as dry boughs under the axe of the woodman. With the clang and the outcry went off the sleep of Faha, and right on Diarmuidh

he ran with levelled javelin for not arousing him before. Diarmuidh stepped aside, and full on the foreign soldiers rushed the chief, and armed and valiant men fell before him as weak grass. "Right," said Diarmuidh, "When the foes have perished to a man, then avenge your wrongs on me." Diarmuidh was engaged by the three kings, and terrible was the strife; for all the skill in stroke and ward that was ever known to warrior of Erin or Lochlann, was possessed by every one of the four. But one by one they sunk under his crushing blows, and of their force of thrice fifty swordsmen, not one was left to bear back the news to the island fortress.

Then proceeded Diarmuidh and Faha to the castle, and joyfully they greeted the enchanted warriors. Again was Diarmuidh about to wield the war-mace, and force an entrance; but Fionn cried, "The blood of the island kings applied to the door will open it wide, and being applied to our persons will restore us to liberty." It was done, and soon every *laoch* (hero) had sprung to his feet, and was rejoicing in his freedom and strength like an unchained eagle. Conan was the last thought of, and when his turn came the magic blood was spent. Great were the lamentations of the troublesome man; but Diarmuidh and Faha came to the rescue. Taking him by the arms they tore him from his icy seat, in spite of his fierce outcries, and long it was before he could walk, chase the deer, or stand in battle line.

News came to the Monarch of the World of the loss of his skilful and brave allies; and at dawn of day he issued forth on the plain, and with his warlike son Borb, marshalled his host numerous as the forest leaves. By this time Oisín, and those who had remained with him, and the four battalions of the Fianna arrived, and were formed in battle-array by Fionn. In front of the first battalion were the agile, and strong, and strife-loving chiefs of the Clann Baoisgne. Before the second, towered Goll, son of Morna, and the Conacht *laochs*. The swift and slaughtering sons of Smol led the third; and the fourth was commanded by the impetuous sons of Nimhneach. Before every chief was borne his banner of silk and gold; and

when the dordfion blew the battle signal, the onset was as the waves of the ocean meeting a mountain river, or as two clouds charged with thunder meeting in the sky. Foot opposed foot, blow met blow, and the war cries and the clang of the arms rose louder than the roar of ten thousand bulls, or the storm-driven waves flung back to ocean from the rocks of Rinkan Bearra. Stern was the strife waged by the savage Borb with the stubborn Goll, son of Morna; but at the end he lay powerless on the bloody turf. Many were the strong fighting men of the Fianna who perished by the sword of the King of the World, till he came before Osgur the peerless, the invincible. Awful was the strife of the heroes, and the weapons of the surrounding warriors were lowered, while they gazed on the fierce combat. After a long strife, the enraged son of Oisín, seizing his ponderous glaive with both hands, and rising, in his might, discharged an irresistible blow on the shoulder of his foeman. Shield and lorica gave way before the crushing stroke, and with a dismal clang of arms the mighty chief fell backward on the red turf.

The strife was soon over; flight was taken to the bay, and all who perished not by the swords, and lances, and javelins of the Fianna, went sorrowfully in their galleys to the land of the white strangers.

The MS. from which this legend was taken and condensed, was lent to the present compiler by the late John Windele, of Cork, a most estimable man, and zealous archaeologist, ever indefatigable in collecting Ogham inscriptions and other traces of early life in our island. Mr. Windele was always as ready to share his antiquarian stores with his brother students as he was diligent and eager in acquiring them.

The Fian legends being composed by different writers, it has happened that some are as consistent as an ordinary romance, while in others, the wildest improbabilities, impossibilities even, are introduced. These last are the productions of the later story-tellers. The following is a specimen of the degraded Ossianic fiction.

THE CHURL IN THE GREY COAT.

ON an occasion, when Fion was holding high festival at his great dun of Almhuin (Allen), a lame, clumsy, ugly-looking

fellow in a great coat, entered uninvited, and sat down at table. He did not content himself with a seat at the lower end, but impudently thrust himself between Caeilthe and Diarmuidh, and began to make free with his neighbours' plates without leave or licence. All eyes were turned on the impudent fellow; even Fionn stared at him with surprise and indignation. "Your looks are saying, O Chief of the Fianna (quoth the grey-coated churl), that no one but a man of prowess should take such liberties; but give me that savoury joint in my hand, and seven yards' law out on the plain, and if even Caeilthe of the fleet foot catches me, I'll give him leave to brain me with the bone." A laugh issued from all mouths at the table, and there was something so ridiculous in the offer, that Caeilthe sprung up, and requested the chief to fling the bone and what was on it to the ignorant clown, to get rid of his odious company. Fionn did so, and the churl, taking it out on the plain, marked the point where his pursuer was to take his place. Measuring seven paces in advance, he shook the prize over his head and set off limping. Caeilthe made a mighty bound towards him, but the lame fellow limped on, and kept his odds. The enraged pursuer increased his speed, but so did the cripple, and shouts of laughter and surprise came from the knights looking on from the mound. The racers were nearly out of sight, when all, actuated by one impulse, joined the chase, which swept onwards between the Shannon and Erne, over the latter river at the Falls of Ballyshannon, through the hills of Donegal, over the Foyle, over the Bann, over Belfast Loch, Strangford Loch, Dundalk Bay, and the Boyne at its mouth, the racers clearing these waters with high springs. Caeilthe was thrown out at Ballyshannon, Fergus at the Foyle, Oisín at the Bann, Oscur at Drogheda; but Fionn, aided by the gift received from the Salmon of Knowledge, held on, and secured the clown as he was preparing to bound from Howth across Dublin Bay. The wearied runners coming up, would have sacrificed the cunning druid in disguise, but Fionn, contenting himself with a sound kick that sent him over the strait to Ireland's Eye, led his wearied knights back to Allen.

THE FIGHT OF CNOC AN AIR (HILL OF SLAUGHTER).

ONE day, as Fionn and his *laochs* were amusing themselves casting those huge finger-stones, still met in many parts of Ireland, they beheld approaching a beautiful woman, whose long hair resembled threads of bright gold. At the sight they all ceased their sport, and two of them went forward to give her welcome. Being conducted to the presence of Fionn, she related her misfortunes and the cause of her visit.

Her father, king of Greece, had married her against her will to Talc Mac Treon, whose face was black as a crow's wing, and who bore the ears and tail of a cat; and she had now travelled every kingdom in the world without being able to find a knight who would deliver her from the monster, for no one was ever found able to exchange three blows with him in battle. Fionn generously promised her his protection; and just at that moment the terrible Talc was seen making towards them with gigantic strides. He demanded his wife, but neither would she go back with him, nor would the Fians resign her to his ill-treatment. A hundred tried warriors in turn were encountered and slain by Talc Mac Treon, and then Osgur was let loose upon him. They fought five days and five nights, and the cruel, deformed giant fell at last by the sword of his matchless foe. The poor lady did not survive the recovery of her liberty; she fell dead of grief for the loss of the Fian heroes who had fallen in her defence.

Osgur's wounds and bruises had scarcely time to heal, when a kinsman of Talc, Mergach of the sharp spears, landed in a neighbouring bay at the head of a strong fleet to avenge his death. He proceeded to the Hill of Slaughter, reproached Fionn with the death of Talc and his wife, and challenged the whole force to meet him next day in mortal fight. Fionn knew, by the virtue of his thumb, the great prowess of Mergach, and after his departure he requested the battalion of smooth and fresh heroes to meet the foe. They said they were ready—so said the battalion of the "chieftains," so said the battalion of the "middle-sized men," so said the battalion of the "middle-aged," so said the battalion of the "stout men;" the battalion of "small

men" were ready, and the battalion of the "rereguard" would be offended if they did not get the post of danger.

Next morning Caoin struck the warning battle-blow on his shield, and Mergach seeing it was neither Fionn nor Osgur, sent forward Donn Dorcan to fight in his place. The two champions contended in "battle and conflict" from morning to eve, and then the stranger sunk beneath the strong arm of the Fian. When Mergach saw the fall of his hero, "he armed his well-proportioned, elegant body in battle-armour for conflict and death," and did not wait long till there stood before him the unconquered son of Oisín; and on the side of Cnoc-an-Air they fought in stern contention for ten days. They rested every night, and on the ninth day they were only known by their voices. Mergach was flung on the sod on the last morning of fight, and the shout of triumph rose from the hosts of the Fianna; but he sprung up again in vigour, and Osgur, for the first time, fell under his shield from a mighty stroke of Mergach's two-edged, broad, and pointed sword. Then rose a yell of grief, and woe, and shame from the seven battalions of Erin. It came sharp on the ears of the fallen warrior, and, with a spring, he was once more erect, and his sharp, heavy blade waving above his bright, four-ridged, pointed helm; the next instant it was on the neck of mighty Mergach, and that warrior's head was shorn off, and flung ten fathoms from his lifeless trunk.

Then did Ciardan's brother, Lliegan the active, strike his shield, and lay low Ciaran, son of Lucha. With Ciaran perished Magnus Mac Lovaran and a hundred men; and at last Conan, the unvaliant and bald, stood before the son of Mergach. "Begone, thou silly coward!" said the hero; "I will not stain sword or lance in thy thin blood." "If thou despise me," said Conan, "at least dread the man at thy back." Then did Lliegan look behind, and his head was shorn from his broad shoulders by the sharp blade of the bald, foul-tongued old man. Dalchai the Stranger then waved his sword, and soon the warriors of Fionn were in grief, for the valiant Fælan was driven behind his shield by his strong might. They roused a shout of woe and terror, and it awakened the mighty Osgur from his low couch of

rushes, where he was reposing from his fierce toil. He approached the chief and said: "O Fionn, I thought by that cry of sorrow that the clan Baoisgne was no more." He shouted to the weakened champion, "Think of former triumphs and fame, O Fælan! shake off sloth; remember that Fionn, Goll, Diarmuidh, and Mac Lucha, have their eyes on thy sword-haft." Then sat fury on the shield of Fælan, and the mighty Dalchai he slew with a furious stroke. Another chief of fame, Ciaoin Mac Lachtna, also fell before his strong might, and then the strife was ended for a time by the appearance of a stately woman of beautiful countenance, Ailne, wife of Mergach. The strangers feebly came behind, and the Fianna gathered to listen to her words. She demanded her husband and sons, and was told that they had fallen in manly fight and contention with the Fians of Erin. She fell helpless on the plain, and her people were in tears, and the warriors of Erin were sad for her deep sorrow.

When she came to herself she sang a wild caoiné over the bodies, every verse beginning with the words *Mo Chuma* (my grief), and recited the omens which foretold her loss. The fairy host that fought in the clouds over the dun, the tears of blood on the cheeks of her warriors as they left home, the vulture's croak, the forgotten leashes of the hounds, the waterfall changed to red gushing spray, the eagle hovering over the fort in the evening, the huge tree withering, the flight of the raven before them, the howling of the dogs at night, the tears found on her cheeks in the morning, the dream of her own head and hands being cut off, and the vision of the pool of blood where the dun ought to be.

Then she accused the Fians that they had slain her husband and sons by treachery, or by disabling them before the fight by magic spells. And Fionn and Fionn's wife felt her woe, and solemnly swore that no evil or magic art had been used, and that the Fians were blameless, as they only fought in the defence of their land and their own lives. But the heart-sore Ailne would not be comforted, and she would have the fight renewed. Fionn was sparing of the blood of friends and foes, and negotiated till she was satisfied with a combat of thirty warriors on either side.

Then Fionn's wife, the Princess Grainne, invited the sorrowful lady to sup with herself and the chiefs, but she would not; and Conan, the foul-mouthed, abused her for her pride, and even ran at her with his pointed sword; but the noble Osgur struck him down, and caused him to howl with pain.

Next morning Grainne took Ailne by the hand, and they stood between the two hosts; and Daire sounded his bugle, and Fionn, the Bar-bua, and the heroes gathered in face of each other; and, as in a match of hurling or comaun, Grainne and Ailne called out in turn, till thirty stout, well-armed, eager, and skilful men stood in shining arms on either side. Among them were Gavan, who had slain in one day three hundred and sixteen foes; Ruane, who would not crush the dry grass in running; Conran, who never left a bone unbroken in a foeman; Cosgar, who would strike a head a mile from the body; and Minaar, who would outrun the wild deer.

At the close of the conflict, two Fians only were able to wield spear or buckler, but life remained not in a single hero of the strangers. Then did Grainne once again entreat Ailne to be satisfied, and depart with her still numerous host. But hate and sorrow were strong at her heart; and Fionn, resenting her determined wish for slaughter, sounded a vengeful call on the Bar-Bua, and the general fight commenced. When it was ended, the revengeful lady had barely three of her people left, and with these she quitted the terrible field of Cnoc-an-Air.

There fell of the Fians on the Hill of Slaughter, Conn Ciarra and Dralla Flann, who would not give way to any power of earth, or sea, or air; Luanan, the strong and swift, who would bring the wild boar from the hills; mighty Cruagan, who would devour a cow and forty cakes of bread at a meal; Cæil, who was swifter than the wind; Dorcan, the hacker of body and bones; and many another terrible gaisca. Fionn, much chagrined at the death of the fair princess and so many brave chiefs, friends and foes, soon quitted the Hill of Slaughter, and, with his surviving laochs, went to chase the wild deer by Loch Lene.

The poem of which the skeleton is here given, was edited, with a literal translation, for the Ossianic Society, by Mr. John O'Daly, whose exertions for the preservation of old Gaelic lore are, or at least should be, known and appreciated by every well-wisher to our national literature.



THE FIANS AT THE HOUSE OF CUANA.

FIONN once sought a night's repose in the house of Conane of the hill ridge, and took things with somewhat of a high hand. This, however, did not prevent the master of the house from subjecting him to the necessity of answering various questions with the strictest regard to truth. It is not easy to ascertain why the Fianna were obliged to perform any duty, however unpleasant—that was imposed on them by women—young, fair, old, or ugly—or even men who chose to assume the office of task-imposers. Conane asked Fionn the meaning of the expression, “As Fionn went to the house of Cuana,” and the following is the explanation given. A version of the story may be seen in the second volume of the “Ossianic Transactions.”

“Oisin, Caeilthe, Mac Lucha, Diarmuidh O'Duine, and myself were on a day of the days on the summit of Cairn Fearguil outside of Luimneach (Limerick) and five hounds with us—that is to say Brann, Sceoluing, Feardubh, Liavleachra, and the swift-footed hound; and we were not long there till we saw a large, immensely-rough giant coming towards us, and an iron fork on his shoulders, and a pig screeching between the prongs, and a handsome, fine unmarried woman walking after him, and scourging him before her. ‘Let me go to accost them,’ said Diarmuidh O'Duine, and he went after them. It was not long until I and the other three that were with me went after Diarmuidh and the giant. We overtook Diarmuidh, but neither he nor we could see the giant nor the girl. For there was a Druidic fog between us and them, and we could not see which way they took.

“However, as we were looking and waiting for the fog to clear, I saw the house of *Cuana* (elegant, artful) at the edge of the plain. We went towards it, and there was a

bawn before the house, and two wells in it—namely, a well with a coarse iron vessel on the brink, and a well with a wooden vessel on the brink of it.

“We entered the house, and the only people in it were a young, serious, fair-haired warrior sitting at the jamb of the door, and the young damsel sitting beside him, and the rough giant sitting at the fire, boiling the pig, and an old grey-headed man of large features sitting at the other side of the fire. And there was a ram inside with a white belly and a black head, two dark bluish green horns, and four green legs. There was a cailleach at the bottom of the room with dark green clothes, and there was no one in the room but these six.

“The young man of the door-jamb welcomed myself, and we sat on the floor near the upper end, and our hounds with us. ‘Let there be humble deference shown to Fionn, son of Cumhall, and to his people,’ said the young man of the jamb. ‘I hate,’ said the giant, ‘for a person to be asked to pay respect to others, while neither much nor little of it is given to himself.’ However, he rose up and paid obedience to me.

“I became very thirsty, and no one brought me drink, and so Caeilthe was much grieved, and stood up. ‘You need not be troubled, O Caeilthe,’ said the young man. ‘Go into the bawn, and bring Fionn a drink from the well you prefer.’ Caeilthe did so, and brought me the wooden vessel full. I drank, and while it was in my mouth, the taste of it was like honey; but when it was swallowed it was more bitter than gall. I felt sharp pains all over me; my breath was stopped, and the appearance of my face was altered.

“Then was Caeilthe in much sorrow and suffering till the young man said to him, ‘Go into the bawn, O Caeilthe, and bring in full the iron vessel from the other well.’ Caeilthe did so, and offered me the vessel, and I put it to my head. And I never suffered so much in hot conflict of battle, nor ever before endured such pain as when it was in my mouth. But when I laid down the vessel, my pains were gone, and the natural appearance of my face was returned, and my people rejoiced.

"Then the young man of the jamb asked if the pig was cooked. 'It is,' said the giant. 'Then give it to me,' said he, 'till I divide it.' 'What share will you make of it?' said the giant. 'I will give the hind-quarter of it to Fionn and his hounds first,' said the young man, 'and then I will give the other hind-quarter to his four young warriors, and a quarter of the head to their four hounds, and another quarter of the head to myself. The rest of the head and the back I give to the old man by the fire and the cailleach in the corner, and the entrails and legs to that young woman and myself.'

"'On my word,' said the old man, 'you have shared her well.' 'On *my* word,' said the ram, 'you have not; and evil was your neglect of myself.' And as he spoke he made a pounce on the quarter that had fallen to the share of Fionn's young men, and took it from them in their despite, and began to eat it. The young warriors took their glaives, and struck at the ram, and they might as well have been hewing at a hard rock. They then went back sorrowfully, and sat in their places on the ground. 'Upon my conscience!' said the old man at the fire, 'sorrowful it is to sit in company with four warriors who cannot hinder a sheep from eating their share of food, and that in their own presence.' As he said that, I seized the ram and caught him by the two legs, and threw him with all my might outside the door, and he fell on the broad of his back, and we saw no more of him.

"Shortly after that the cailleach rose out of her corner and flung her dark-green mantle on my four warriors, and made of them four shaking, drivelling, withered old men, and then I sorrowed, and great fear came upon me. When the young man at the jamb of the door saw that, he asked me to sit beside him, and he cast me into a deep sleep, and the cailleach removed her mantle from the shoulders of the warriors, and they were restored to their strength and their first appearance. When I awoke and found them so, great was my joy.

"'Fionn,' said the young man at the jamb, 'are you not astonished at the order and situation of this house?' I declared that I never saw anything more astonishing than it.

‘Then I shall explain it to you,’ said he. ‘The giant that you saw first with the pig screeching in the mouth of the fork, is he yonder, and his name is *Leisgé* (sloth); and this damsel by me was she that was whipping him, and her name is *Meanamna* (animation, energy, vigour), for animation drives sloth before her, and goes as far in the winking of an eye as sloth would in twelve months. The old man by the fire is *Seagha Caol Lear* (crafty, slender, clear-sighted); and the ram is called *Cionta an Duine* (guilt of man). The caillich is *An Criona* (old age). Her mantle brings the young and strong to weakness and wretchedness. The two wells are Lying and Truth-telling; for as sweet as a lie is in the telling, so bitter does it turn out when told. My name is Cuana, of *Inis Cuileann* (Holly Isle), though it is not there I am accustomed to be; and it was an excessive love I had harboured for you on account of your valour and sensibility, that made me put the giant in your way. Now bring all your people here, and let them enjoy sleep till morning.’ I did so; and when we woke at dawn, we found ourselves on the grassy side of Cairn Fearguil, with our dogs and our arms near us. And that is the style in which Fionn paid a visit to the house of Cuana.”

This odd legend slightly resembles Thor’s journey to Utgard, and the delusions practised on him. Both the legends owed their existence to some myth known to the ancestors of Teutons and Celts before their separation in Central Asia.



THE FORTUNES OF DIARMUIDH AND GRAINNE.

MAGHNEIS, the fair and stately wife of Fionn, having been taken from him by death, and the sorrow of loneliness pressing on him, he was advised by his chiefs, viz., Oisín and Caeilthe Mac Ronain, to ask in marriage Grainné, the beauteous and proud daughter of Cormac, son of Art, son of Conn, king of Erin. Consent was given by the father, and not refused by the daughter, but she had loved Diarmuidh from the day on which she had seen him defeat at hurling the most active men of the Fianna. So, while

they kept high state and feasting at Tara, she gave to all that sat at table drink from an enchanted cup, which had the effect of inducing a deep slumber, but to Diarmuidh she did not offer it; and now she laid geasa on him that he should depart from the palace with her, and make her his wife. This brought grief and woe into the heart of the faithful partizan, but to refuse the demand of the princess would deprive him of the name of hero. The gates were guarded, and he would not leave the fortress through the wicket of the ladies; so with his two tall, strong spears to aid, he bounded over the ramparts, and met the princess on the plain.

Fionn, when he awoke and heard what had occurred, was filled with grief and rage, and pursued the fugitives, but he could not get sympathy from Oisín, from Osgur, from Diorrhíng, from Mac Lúcha, or Caeilthe. They knew the reluctance of Diarmuidh to what he was obliged by the demands of Grainné, and that he did not make the princess his wife till stung to deep resentment by the vengeful pursuit of his chief.

After many combats and escapes, they approached the coast of Kerry, and there Diarmuidh beheld a fleet approaching the shore. This fleet was commanded by three chiefs called respectively Black Foot, White Foot, and Strong Foot, and their object was to take himself living or dead. They asked him had he seen the outlaw, and he answered that he had seen him yesterday, and proposed that they should bring out a hogshead of wine till he would show them a trick. He stood on the hogshead, and drove it to the top of a hill, and then rolled it back to the shore, himself still standing as at first straight on it as it rolled. "Bah!" said one of the captains, "that trick is not worth showing; I'll do the same." He got the cask to the top of the hill, mounted on it, and with the first motion of the vessel he fell forward, and was killed by the cask plunging over him. Fifty captains tried the exploit that day, and in the evening they were numbered among the dead.

Next day he came to the shore again; and on being asked his news, he said he had seen a man who had seen Diarmuidh that morning, and proposed another game to

pass the day. He set the yellow spear of Lear upright in the ground, point upwards, and springing aloft, he came down straight on the point with the sole of his right foot, and bounded lightly to the earth.

"That trick is only fit to be shown to children," said a young warrior; "behold how easily it is done!" and springing up, he came down heavily on the enchanted spear-point. Fifty stout men were lost on that day to Fionn, because they would contend in the dangerous game of the yellow spear.

Next day he presented himself with two long forked poles, which he set upright; and between the forks, with its edge upwards, he placed the great and fierce sword of Aongus of the Brugh, the Moraltha (Great Bitter One). Springing from the turf, he lighted on it, walked from hilt to point along its edge, and then leaping to the ground, he asked whether it was a feat worth imitation. It was disparaged as before, and fifty lives were lost showing how easy it was in the doing. This day he promised to show them Diarmuidh on the morrow.

The following account of what occurred is taken from *Transactions of the Ossianic Society*, vol. iii.: "Diarmuidh rose at early dawn, and girt about him his suit of battle and conflict, under which, through which, or over which, it was not possible to wound him. And he took the Moraltha, which left no stroke nor blow unfinished. He took, likewise, his two thick-shafted javelins of battle, the Ga-buie (yellow dart) and the Ga-dherg (red dart), from which no man or woman that had been wounded by them recovered.

. When Grainné beheld Diarmuidh with bravery and daring (clothed) in his suit of anger and of battle, fear and great dread seized her.

Then he drew near to the host of the green Fianna, and began to slaughter and discomfort them heroically and with swift valour, so that he rushed under them, and through them, and over them, as a hawk would go through small birds, or a wolf through a large flock of small sheep. Even thus it was that Diarmuidh hewed crossways the glittering, very beautiful mail of the men of Lochlann; so that there went not a man from that spot without having the grievous-

ness of death and the final end of life executed upon him, but the three green chiefs and a small number of their people."

And the three green chiefs, and their three enchanted hounds, and all that could be sent against Diarmuidh, perished either by a squeeze of his strong arms, or the edge of the Moraltha, or the points of the yellow javelin or the red javelin; and at last Fionn was obliged to apply to the great witch his nurse. She came above Diarmuidh when he was hunting, and seated on a huge water lily, she poured through a gap in its middle, resembling the hole in a quern-stone, darts and rocks, till he was deeply exasperated, so much so, indeed, that he was forced to the extreme measure of lying on his back, and making a powerful cast of the Ga-dherg at his tormentor. She fell headlong through the hole, and no more is told of her.

The father of Diarmuidh was Donn, son of Donagh, by whom, when young, he was committed to the care of the great enchanter of the Danaan race, Aongus of the Brugh, on the Boyne (near Stackallen). A son of a vassal or farmer of Donn's was also committed to the care of the people of the sage Aongus, and this circumstance gave some annoyance to the father of Diarmuidh.

Anciently in Ireland kings and chiefs were endowed with singular privileges, and placed under very singular restraints or geasachs, such as eating or not eating of fish caught in such and such lakes or streams, or walking or not walking in certain meadows. One restriction laid on the Chief of the Fianna was, that he should never sleep ten nights in succession in his palace of Almhuin; and one day he was reminded of the unpleasant predicament of being obliged to go look for lodgings that very evening. While he was debating where he should take his rest, Donn invited him to the Brugh to visit Aongus, and thither they went. They were welcomed and entertained, and the son of Donn and the son of the farmer played together; and as fond as Aongus was of Diarmuidh, so fond were the servants of the farmer's child. Two of the stag hounds quarreled about the bones, and some of those at the feast went to part them, and the women and domestics were frightened,

and there was great disturbance, and the child of the farmer got between Donn's knees, and either through inadvertence or design he was squeezed to death.

When the father found his child no more, he uttered cries of sorrow, and demanded of Fionn eric for his loss, which he agreed to give, provided the mark of a hound's tooth or paw was found on him. There was none, and then he laid the dire injunction of the Druid's Cave of Cruachan on him (Fionn) that he should reveal the slayer. Fionn called for a chess-board and water, and put his thumb between his teeth, and distinctly saw the circumstances of the child's death. Then, without revealing the slayer, he offered to pay the eric himself, but the father refused, and obliged him to name the perpetrator. When he heard the name, he said it was easy for Donn to pay him by giving up his son Diarmuidh to himself to be served in the same way. This request annoyed Aongus and enraged Donn, but the bereaved father would not be otherwise appeased. He drew forth a wand of sorcery, and striking the lifeless body of his son, it became a living green pig, without ears or tail, and rushed forth through the open door. "I lay the spell of power on thee," said the enchanter, "that thou live as long as the son of Donn, and that thou destroy him at last." He departed; discomfort and sorrow staid behind, and Aongus laid geasa on Diarmuidh that he should never hunt a boar by day or night.

During the pursuit of himself and Grainné by Fionn, Aongus had never deserted them for a day. When besieged in a thicket, or beset in the branches of the tree of magic berries, he always conveyed Grainné away in his cloak, leaving the knight to free himself by lance and sword. Fionn at last, dismayed by the havoc made among his allies by the weapons of Diarmuidh, and the estrangement of Osgur and the other well-wishers of the hero, proposed peace. It was accepted, and the barony in which the Dowse mountain of Wicklow stands, and the barony of Corca-Dhuiné, in Kerry, and the barony of Ceash-Coran, in Sligo, were granted to the hard-hunted pair, and in the last locality they settled to repose from their fears and fatigues;

and their resting-places during their wanderings are still pointed out by our peasantry.

But even in this Elysian epoch of glory, human happiness was not without its alloy in Erin. Grainné, at the head of a princely table, with the second best champion in the world for her loving husband (Osgur being the first), with brave sons and fair daughters, should in an evil hour invite Cormac her father, and Fionn, the rejected of her youth, to witness her happiness and her triumph. Diarmuidh gave an unwilling consent, though he yearned for the society of his tried brothers in arms, Oisín, Osgur, Caeilthe, Dhiorryng, Mac Lucha, and Fœlan. The festival was a year in preparation, and they spent a year in enjoying it.

On the last night of that year Diarmuidh was awaked three times by the yelling of a hound, heard only by him, and at dawn he quitted the rath against Grainné's wish. She requested that he would at least take with him the Moraltha and the Ga-dherg, but he would only take the Begaltha (small bitter one) and the Ga-buie, and the "Son of the Hazel," his favourite hound. Nothing is said of his journey till he came to the Hill of Ben-Gulban, and there he met Fionn alone. Fionn informed him that his people were chasing the green cropped boar of Ben-Gulban, and that he had already slain thirty of them since the chase had begun. He then gave an account of the entertainment at the Brugh of the Boyne when Diarmuidh was a boy, of the transformation of the dead child to a boar, and of the prohibition laid on him (Diarmuidh) never to follow swine in any shape in the chase. Oddly enough, Diarmuidh knew nothing of the geasa under which he lay, and though unfurnished with the sword or spear of power, he was firmly resolved to give battle to the enchanted enemy of his house.

Just then the shouts of the hunters, the baying of the hounds, and the rushing of the furious beast up the tulach (mound), were plainly heard; and as the furious and fell savage was rushing on the doomed hero, he put his finger in the silken loop of the yellow-shafted javelin, and smote him unerringly in the mid forehead. It glanced off as from a hard stone wall, and when he struck the boar a furious

blow with the Begaltha, the blade of inferior power flew in two pieces.

The enchanted boar rushed wildly on him, and seizing him with his savage tusks, tore his flesh and inflicted wounds on his body ; but with strength more than human, he flung the hilt of his faithless blade against its forehead, and sent it rolling lifeless down the tulach. And from that day the spot is called the "Mound of the Sword-hilt."

Then Diarmuidh, feeling the signs of dissolution coming on him, besought Fionn to give him a drink from the palms of his hands, and restore him to strength and vigorous life ; for Fionn had received that power along with the gift of clear knowledge. Fionn, in reply, reproached him for the wrong he had wrought him ; but Diarmuidh defended his conduct by the impossibility of denying the princess's request, and reminded him of several occasions on which he had saved the lives of himself and the Fianna, especially at the ford of the quick-beam castle. Oisin, Osgur, and the others having arrived, earnestly pressed their chief to save the life of Diarmuidh, their dear brother in arms and love. He said no water was nigh ; but a well was shown him nine ridges off. He went slowly, he returned more slowly, and the water was out of his fingers into the grass before he had retraced four steps. Then did the mournful shouts of the Fianna fill his heart with fear and anger, and he returned to the spring. Hundreds of eyes were darting rays of eagerness and intense fear on his hands, as he returned the second time to the expiring hero ; but when he stood by his side, his palms were dry as the brown leaves at Samhain. Then cried Osgur, and his voice shook the rocks on the opposite hill : "O Fionn, if you bring not the life-giving draught, one or both of us will never see the bottom of this tulach in life." Diarmuidh turned his dying looks in love on the noble-hearted Osgur ; but when the hard-hearted chief was holding the draught of life in mockery to his lips, they were closed in cold and rigid death.

The faithful Fians raised three shouts of heavy sorrow over the body of their lost brother, and then covered it decently with their mantles. The woe and resentment of Grainné cannot be told. She uttered a heart-rending caoine

over her brave and faithful lord ; and in time her sons brought forces countless as the sands against the ungenerous chief who had suffered him to perish.

And Fionn and his forces would have fallen before the sons of Diarmuid—Donoch, Achy, Connda, Silshara, and Iollan, but for the sagacity of the clear-minded chief. Unbidden and unexpected, he presented himself to the sight of Grainné in one of her lonely walks of sadness. She bitterly reproached him, and he answered not in justification. Twice seven times did he endure her wrath ; but she tired of resentment before he tired of abiding it. With wise words he justified himself against some charges, and on love for herself he laid the blame of the rest.

The gallant sons of Diarmuidh returned from collecting and mustering their forces and their allies ; and on the plain before the dun they were received by the right hand of Grainné, while her left grasped that of the chief of the Fians. They burned to revenge the death of their father ; but how could they seek the life of their mother's husband ?

The remains of the gallant Diarmuidh were not left to the care of wife nor children. The sage Aongus had them conveyed to the Brugh, and there they were preserved for long centuries.

A myth antecedent to the classic days of Greece and Rome furnished the subject of this legend to the Celts, and of "Venus and Adonis" to classic poets, and of the youth worshipped and bewailed once a year by Assyrian women, and recorded in undying verse by Milton. The Marquis of Lorn shares, in common with the Mac Dermots of Coolavin in Sligo, a conviction of descent from "Brown Diarmaid." [Scotch spelling of Diarmuidh.]

OISIN IN TIR NA-N-OGE.

Most of the great Fenians were dead and gone—Fionn slain by treachery at the Boyne, Diarmuidh slain by the green boar of Ben Gulban, and Mac Lucha and the peerless Osgur slain in the fatal fight of Gavra, as told in *Legendary Fictions of the Irish Celts*. While Oisín, with a remnant of his tribe was enjoying the excitement of the chase among the

mist-covered hills that surround Loch Lene (Lakes of Killarney), a beauteous fawn started before the hounds, and led them westwards, through deep defiles, over mountains, and through woods, till all the hunters were left far behind Oisín and the faithful and fleet hounds, Brann and Sceoluing. They were drawn on, not by desire of the death of the beautiful fawn, but a wish to secure her to come and play with them round the dun. They were near her traces as they pressed on through a thick forest, but when they emerged on a plain which bordered a sheltered bay, no trace of their deer was to be descried. A maiden of the most rare beauty, mounted on a white steed, was seen advancing towards them. Her hair was the colour of red gold, her robes of green and azure silk, and wreaths of diamonds and pearls decked her head, and encircled her neck and shoulders.

Oisín stood wrapped in an ecstasy of love and wonder, while, in words of enchanting power and sweetness, she told him that she was the daughter of the king of the "Land of Youth," that lay under the great western sea, where Diarmuidh, Osgur, Mac Lucha, and the six brave sons of Cæilthe Mac Ronain, were now resting from their fatigues. She then acknowledged that she had heard so much of his valour, his poetic powers, and his present loneliness, that she had come up to earth to see him with her own eyes, and to convey him with her to Tir na-n-Oge, if he thought her worthy to be his wife. She had scarcely done speaking, when Oisín was standing by the side of the white steed, and kissing the rosy-tipped fingers of the sea-maid.

Little persuasion was needed for the gallant and bereaved hero. He was soon seated before her on the docile steed, and its head was turned to the setting sun, when the cries of the poor dogs sent a sharp pang through his heart. He turned and stretched out his hand to caress their heads; but the fair and considerate princess had no wish that their happy journey should begin in sorrow. She lightly struck their heads with a wand of witch hazel, and with joyful cries they bounded along their path, and chased each other in joyful springs around the graceful horse. When the hunters arrived at the edge of the wood, the waves were just touching the silver shoes of the steed, and when they

reached the strand, the hounds and horse were on the open ocean, pacing as over a firm grassy plain; and their lost brother chief, and the fair princess seated behind him, were waving adieux of affection and regret.

They rode a hundred miles along the dancing waves, and the distance seemed not a field's length, nor the time the counting of half a hundred; and then the waves rose round them in green transparent walls, and formed a sparkling roof of emerald and amethyst above their heads, and they were in the palace of the king of the "Land of Youth." They were encircled by youths and maidens with joy on their tongues, smiles on their faces, and youth and beauty in their graceful forms; and Oisín became the husband of the princess, and the loved and esteemed chief of the happy dwellers of the paradise under the sea. Great was the enjoyment of the son of Fionn, but in one respect he had been deceived. He hoped to find the loved companions of his earthly pleasures, chases, and battles before him, and when he spoke to his devoted princess about them he got but confused and evasive replies. After some efforts he ceased to make enquiry, as he saw that he only gave pain, and obtained no intelligence.

And now for a space the happiness of Oisín was perfect. His wife was all that an amiable wife should be, watching his every wish, allowing him freely to ramble through the land even without her society, but ever marking his return with the smile and embrace of a heart-welcome. After a lapse of what seemed a quarter of the ever-varying year, he found himself growing insensible to the happiness he knew he possessed, even as delight in the bright sunshine on earth would be unfelt if the dark intervals of night did not intervene. He longed for the fatigues of the chase, that he might enjoy the hours of rest. He felt no hunger, therefore the sight of the splendid feast gave him no pleasure. He feared not an invasion to wrest away his land, nor an ambitious or successful rival in the affections of his wife. If he were obliged to put on armour, and wield sword or spear, to guard for himself his beauteous and affectionate princess or his delightful land, then he would value them as they deserved. Even Brann and Sceolluing gave him no

comfort. If not leisurely taking their ever ready food, they slumbered lazily on their soft beds ; and when their master gathered resolution to walk to their huts, and caress their silky heads or backs, they moved their tails and ears with trouble, and just opening their eyes to recognize their lord, they closed them again in weak and unrefreshing sleep. He grew so disheartened at last that he inquired no more for the Fenian heroes ; but he vaguely cherished a hope that they might have returned to Erinn, and be now engaged as of old, in chase, in fight, at the feast, or listening to the bards. No chagrin or peevishness of his ever drew complaint or reproach from the princess ; and at times he endeavoured to repay her unvarying sweetness and cordiality by an outward show of strong affection.

At last his desire of a change and of hearing of his former comrades grew so strong, that he requested his princess to allow him to revisit his former haunts in Erinn, promising to return with speed, and repay her compliance with tenfold love and tenderness. Tears fell from the eyes of the loving woman. She said that her soul was chilled with fear that if he once quitted her she would never see him again, that obstacles which he could not surmount would prevent his return to Tir na-n-oge. His love for his wife and his eagerness to depart strengthened with every word, and at last she thought better to let him depart, in hope of rekindling their once enjoyed felicity, than to render his existence pleasureless by retaining him against his will.

So she commanded the white steed which had borne them across the sea to be brought forth ; and while her eyes overflowed with tears, she addressed her lord : " My only happiness, you are leaving me in misery, and my heart tells me that we shall never meet again. Love is only asleep in your heart, not dead, and the memory of the days we have passed together will torture you while you are allowed to feel. Mount our trusty, charmed steed, and dismount not for any cause or motive till you return, for if your foot, or hand, or body touch the soil of Erinn, there you will remain with a burthen of years and weakness on your frame till relieved by a lingering death. Oh ! mo chuma ! Oh ! my heart's pulse ! how shall I endure existence without you ! "

The affection which was only slumbering in the heart of the hero now flowed forth on the devoted woman, and he half resolved to give up his journey ; but old memories, love of change, and desire to break up the uniformity of his quiet, unruffled felicity prevailed. He mounted the white charger, folded his wife in one parting embrace, shot upwards, and was presently moving in the free upper air, along the sparkling surface of ocean.

Oh ! how enchanting was the view of the old island of his youth ! How delightful the varied surface of forest, meadow, rock, mountain, and lake, as they once more blessed his eyes ! Not only was his sight, but his hearing, and even his smell entranced by the recovered sounds and scents of former days. He would have sprung to the turf and kissed it, only for the charge now faintly remembered. But he became soon aware of many changes. He repaired to a near fort of the Fianna, and found nothing but a grassy hillock, except where a building of rough stone, with a pinnacle surmounted by a cross, stood on the once site of the great hall. He saw men and women kneeling before the door ; he heard the tinkle of bells, and soon beheld a procession with silk canopy, cross, pastoral staff, and richly-wrought banners, and a man clothed in gorgeous vestments holding an Object of Adoration in a golden shrine ; he heard the music of sweet hymns as they slowly moved round an enclosure, and saw all the assisting crowd bend their heads in adoration to the earth. He involuntarily stooped his head to the horse's mane, and moved not till the procession had re-entered the building, till the bells had ceased to sound, and the crowds had begun to disperse. He then accosted one who passed close by where he stood, and who, with all in the assembly, was now admiringly scanning the mighty form, the quaint equipments, and the charmed steed of the warrior : " I pray, to which of the divinities have you been paying your devotional duties—to Beal, to Samain, to Lear, or to the spirits of the hills, the lakes, or the woods ? " " We adore not these creatures or spirits, noble stranger. We adore the Creator of earth and men, of Beal and of Samain, and of those spirits, if such there be, who watch over the surface or the depths of earth and ocean ! " " But

how long has this new worship prevailed, O courteous informant?" "In the manhood of Patrick the cleric it commenced, and now the holy man's steps are feeble with age, and his hair is white. The world's Lord sent him to us from the land of the Gaul." "And why did not the Fianna of Erin prevent the approach of himself and his troops with spear and buckler?" "Ah! he came unattended with spear-man or shield-bearer. His only arms were a charmed book, and a cross, a shamrock, and what I may not name to pagan ears; and against these, shield and helm were as the leaves of the dock-weed, and spear and sword as the pointed rush of the marsh." "Oh! mo chuma! But where dwell the Fians of Faël, who held watch within this fort when the sacred fires were lighted on the last feast of Samain?" "Fians! No Fenian heroes have trod this ground for three times fifty years. Fionn was slain, so was the noble Osgur, so was the son of Lucha, and since the bloody field of Gavra, no chief of the tribes of Baoisgné or Mac Morna has made himself spoken of. The last known of Oisín, the noble, the poetic, is that he was seen on a white steed, which also bore a lady brighter than Beal in beauty, and that their course, together with the trusty hounds of Fionn, was towards the happy island of 'Hy Breasil.'"

It was the eve of May, and as he approached a lofty pillar tower, the work of the Danaans of old days, he beheld a crowd advancing with garlands of flowers and green boughs, to a building which had not been there when he last went by in pursuit of the wild deer. "I am not a thorough stranger," said he; "the old worship is here; they are going to light the Beal fire." Just then a venerable looking man, with long, coarse gown, girt round him by a cord, approached, and to Oisín's question he answered that the people were not about to worship the sun, nor light fires to his honour. "They are entering the church to sing the praises of the Lord, the Creator of sun and moon." "And what of the mid-season of light and heat, and of the time of Samain, when the fruits are gathered?" "These are changed to Christian festivals, O knight; but, to our sorrow, the people still jump through fires, and consult evil spirits for their future fortunes." "And this building with

the cross crowning its sloping tower?" "The church in which we offer prayer and praise to the Creator." "And why place it so near the relic of the old worship?" "We come to change no custom, nor destroy any long-cherished memory harmless in its nature."

So the son of Fionn traversed the island, and found fewer swords and spears than in the days of his youth, but sickles, ploughshares, and scythes had much increased. He stood on the fatal field of Gavra, and his heart was covered with desolation as he called on the spirits of the heroes that slept beneath to reveal their abiding place, and comfort his saddened spirit.

In the Bay of Binn Edair he found barks entering and passing out, laden with peaceful products of the soil, or of the fashioning of man's hands for the purposes of traffic, and he felt that further research would deepen the gloom of his spirit. A desire to return to his princess and her happy realm seized on his soul, and he said: "I will forget my former existence; I will return my wife's true affection, and I will be happy. When her loving eyes are bent on me, when I look on the smiling and happy faces of her people, who love me for her sake, I will recall my present desolation and say to my heart, 'Take thy fill of comfort.'"

He passed the Liffey at the "Bridge of Wattles," and heard the clang of trowel and hammer in the centre of the swampy village on its banks, where a building was rising for the purpose of divine worship; and as he passed up Gleann 'a Smolach (Glen of Thrushes) he beheld a crowd endeavouring to remove a mighty stone from the quarry, to the rough vehicle on which it was to be conveyed to the building near the river. The unwieldy mass was too much for the unskillful men to get it raised on the low machine, and they painfully heaved and tugged as Oisín looked on for the result. At last the unsuitable tackle gave way, and the mighty stone, fast slipping, would have crushed five of the artizans, when the knight, stooping, seized the mass, and flung it heavily on the wheeled platform. Alas! as he did so, the girths of the saddle snapped with the violent strain of his body, down came the rider, away flew the

white steed, and a withered, blind, and feeble old man, lay helpless on the side of Gleann-'a-Smolach.

The cart with its heavy load was painfully conveyed to Bal' a Clia' (Bail' Atha Cliath, Town of the Ford of Hurdles), where the stone was to form part of the rising temple; and the apostle hearing of the strange event, got the weakly old hero conveyed to an adjoining house of religious men, and looked to his every comfort. He explained to him the principles of Christianity, and urgently besought him to embrace them; but his memory was filled with the exploits and the fame of the passed-away race of heroes, and pride held the approaches of his heart so well, that Christian humility could get no entrance. The saint turned the conversation at times to the subject of his early life, and then he related the stories of the Chase of Sliav Guillin, the flight of Diarmuidh and Grainné, or the slaughter of Cnoc-an-air, or Gavra; and these recitals were thenceforth preserved in the memory of the bards and storytellers, and afterwards carefully written in the famous old books of the scribes.

It grieved the noble old warrior when his hearers seemed to distrust his veracity on the subject of the superiority of things in his younger days, such as the great size of the fruits, the leaves, and the animals. The head cook of the religious house, not calculating on the appetite of the great militia men of the days of Cormac, sometimes stinted the surviving member of that superhuman body, and the only revenge he would condescend to take was, to declare that in the days of the Fianna the ivy leaves were the size of a warrior's shield, the rowan-tree berries as large as a sheep, and a lark's leg as bulky as the hind quarter of an ox. The cook uttered an irreverent laugh, and the old knight did not condescend to repeat his assertion.

Next day, however, he took a trusty guide, and they set out on their travels with a wolf hound, and nothing is told of their adventures till they came to the great plain of Allen, in Kildare. They stopped by an upright Dallan, and the guide, digging by its side, soon discovered a rusted spear, a bit of bog-butter, and the great war-bugle of Oisín's father, the Dord Finn. By the directions of the old cham-

pion he blew a blast on the instrument, but had scarcely done so when he dropped it in fright, so unearthly and terrible was the sound. Then said Oisin, "What do you see towards the north?" "Oh! I see a troop of huge birds as black as night; they are hastening towards us; the dog is tugging at the leash; I am unable to hold him." "Then give him liberty." Off bounded the noble hound, and after a few moments, during which the fleet heavy tramp of the birds was heard shaking the earth, the giolla shouted, "Oh! the brave dog has the largest of the fierce fowl on the ground, and is throttling it." "Noble hound!" cried the blind warrior, "worthy to be the son of Brann, or Sceoluing! What now?" A wild unearthly roar was heard, and the attendant cried "Oh, chief! the black fowl is quiet, his companions have fled to the three winds, and the hound is rushing towards us with eyes on flame, and bloody jaws wide open. We shall be destroyed." "Kneel on one knee; plant the spear firm, and receive the furious beast on its point." It was done, and the career of the dog was soon at an end: the fated weapon entering his breast, transfixing him, and with a wild unearthly howl he fell forward on the earth, forcing the spear out of the grasp of the terrified giolla.

Agreeable to his master's directions the attendant hewed off the thigh of the slain bird, and then restored the spear and the war horn to their resting place. On their return they fetched with them a rowan-tree berry from Gleann 'a Smolach and an ivy leaf from Chapel Izod, and the three spoils exceeded in size the boast of Oisin to the thrifty housekeeper.

Afterwards the noble old warrior was treated with more deference by the household, and a more liberal allowance of provisions was accorded. His long and unprofitable discussions with the saint—are they not to be read at full length in the *Transactions of the Ossianic Society*? Let us hope that his conversion, though not recorded in these faithful annals, was effected, and the apostle thus recompensed for all the time devoted to that meritorious object.

Our *Ossianic tales* having come to a natural close, those readers of

ours who have not made a study of the subject are informed that the genuine Ossianic remains are few in number. In the Book of Leinster (see above) are preserved five short poems attributed to Fionn Mac Cumhaill, and two ascribed to Oisín. In the Books of Ballymote and of Lecain is preserved one by Fergus the Eloquent, son of Fionn, and another by Caeilthe Mac Ronain his cousin. The Gaelic text of Macpherson's *Ossian* was published in 1807, eleven years after his death and republished in a most expensive style within this year.

Mr. J. F. Campbell has in the fourth volume of his *West Highland Tales* handled the Ossianic Controversy with much candour and ability, and at considerable length. We prefer to present his conviction of Macpherson's manipulation of the genuine Gaelic legends to which he had access, and the transformation to which he subjected them, rather than utter our own opinions, which might be considered as more or less tinged by prejudice.

Mr. Campbell contends for the existence in the Highlands in the early part of last century of a wealth of oral Ossianic legends, identical in substance and nomenclature with the Irish stories, and besides, a good sprinkling of MSS., but nothing of the length or solemn character of either of the epics, *Fingal* or *Temora*. These legends were used, and abused, and distilled by the poet of Badenoch, and the result was the English *Ossian* of 1860, and the still more provoking Gaelic one of 1807. Mr. Campbell is confident that Macpherson was incompetent to put this last named version together, faulty and defective as he acknowledges it to be, but does not assert that it was the production of his cousin of Strathmashie to whom it is attributed by some.

How different has been, Mr. Campbell's own proceedings; he has at a great outlay of time, and travel, and labour, collected the Gaelic fireside lore of Highlands and Isles, and found the shepherds, and fishermen, and peasants persuaded that the stories were all about Irish giants, and *gruagachs*, and *gaiscachs*, and ladies, and that the places where the deeds occurred were all in Ireland. In no one story did he ever hear the name of *Fingal* nor of *Morven* his fabulous kingdom. Determined Caledonian as Mr. Campbell is, and we like him the better for being so, he has never in a single instance altered a name, nor transferred the scene of an Irish tale to Scotland. He lovingly advises the Irish and Scotch Gael to rejoice in their common stock of legendary lore, and not foolishly quarrel about their respective portions, and the advice comes from a truthful and judicious spirit.



THE AMADHAN MOR.

THE *Big Fool* was the strongest man in the world, body and fists. As he and his true love were one day walking in a lovely valley near Loch Lene, they saw a chief approaching. He had on a rich mantle, and bore a golden cup in one hand, and when he came near he hailed them.

"Fair couple, tell me your name and the name of this valley." "Maev is the name of this young woman, I am called the Big Amadhān, and the name of the valley I know not; I never was here before. If you have liquor in that cup worthy of a *gaisca*, let me take a drink." "A thousand welcomes, but be moderate!" "Oh, to be sure;" but the Big Fool never took the goblet from his lips while a drop remained, for it was sweeter than the sweetest mead.

Just as he let it go from his mouth, his two legs dropped off from the knees, and down he came on his stumps. Bitter were the tears that Maev of the white shoulders shed at her husband's mischance. "Is it thus that you show hospitality to your visitors, man of ill-fortune?" "The fault is your own. If you had drunk sparingly, no harm would have befallen you!" "By the hand of my gossip, I won't leave a pair of legs on any one I meet, beginning with yourself, till I recover them." "Don't touch me if you are wise. I have only to mutter one word to draw your strength from your body, and weaken you like the child of yesterday. Are these your hounds coming down the glen?"

A stag was sweeping down the valley, and hounds and mounted men were pursuing him. A white dog was foremost of the pack, and swift as the deer went, the Big Amadhan kept within seven paces of him, and seven paces behind the hero came the dog. Never was there so long a valley; never were matched deer, man, and dog of such fleet limbs. At last the Big Amadhān thought it better to bring the chase to an end. So he poised his spear, and making an accurate and very strong cast, it entered at the beast's haunch, and came out at his breast. Up came the dog, and leaped with joy round the *gaisca*, and licked his hands.

It was not long till the master of the hunt came up. He had a gold hafted sword by his side, and two long sharp spears in his hand; a gold brooch held his cloak, and a gold band went round his birredh. "I thank you, good fellow," said he, "for killing that deer for me. Will you help my men to cut it up?" "I killed him for myself and my wife," said the big Amadhān; "you shall not taste a morsel of it." "Well, at least, allow my dog to come to

me." "First tell me your name and title." "I am the Enchanter of the Black Valley and the owner of the White Dog, the fleetest hound within the four seas." "You are so no more; the dog is mine." "You are unjust; you should be content with the deer."

Maev had hastened after her husband and was now come up. She took his left arm within her two, and lovingly looked up in his face. "Though you have done me wrong," said the enchanter, "I wish you joy of your beautiful wife. Where is your lios or caisiol, and what is the name of your tribe?" "I have neither land nor fort. I live by the might of my arm. A druid whom I met this morning, deprived me of my legs, and till I recover them I will despoil and discomfort every brother druid of his that I meet." "Well, well; give me my dog, and come yourself and wife, and live with me in my dun, where you can express no wish which shall not be satisfied." "But how shall I recover my legs?" "If you please me, even your legs shall be restored. I will get the Druid of the Gold Cup into my power, and force him to give them up." The big hero looked at his wife, she looked at him, and he agreed to the offer.

So he stopped, and taking the legs of the deer in his hands, he set it round his neck; Maev sat on its side, and so the two men, the woman, and the dog went on, and nothing is said of their journey till they came to the end of the valley.

There, on a near hill, was a fort, and every stone, and defence, and gate of it was of yellow gold.

"What is the name of that dun?" said the gaisca, "and who is its chief?"

"That," said the enchanter, "is *Dun an Oir* (fort of gold), and I am its chief, and there you shall be entertained till you displease me."

So they entered the gates, and the Amadhān laid down his load at the door, and the druid brought him and his wife where his own wife was lying on her soft couch. Said the lady to Maev, of the silken robe,—

"What is your name, beauteous woman, and the name of him you obey?"

"The Big Amadhān is he called, and he has never met his equal in battle and conflict. I am Maev, and his love for me is only equalled by mine for him."

"But why, O fair Maev of the silken robe, does he want all below the knees?"

"The druidic cup of mead it was, O lady of Dun an Oir, my sorrow be on it! But the longest road has an end, and the master of the cup will be one day under the foot of the Big Amadhān. By your hand, lady, he has subdued all the kings and chiefs of broad Erin."

So they made three divisions of the night; the first they spent at the table, the second in conversation, and the third was given to rest. Next morning the druid and the gaisca were walking on the ramparts, and thus spoke the master of Dun an Oir.

"I go to chase the deer from Dundéalagan to Gleann 'a Smolach and your duty will be to let neither king nor chief within my gates; and if by your neglect they should get in, allow them not to quit till I return. My wife is very beautiful, and in my absence, when hunting, many a young prince and tiernach would be well pleased to pay her their false compliments. This is the only kind of service I shall ever require at your hands. Ask of me in return anything you will."

Away went the master of Dun an Oir, and away with him went his white dog. The lady reclined on her couch, and the Big Fool lay on the floor. After a while, he felt such a weight of sleep on his eyes that he could not keep them open.

"By the hand of your husband, O lady," said he, "I fear I shall be found wanting in my duty. I could not continue awake even to be made Ard-Righ at Tara. All in my power I will perform. Here I lie along at your feet, and no intruder can approach you without disturbing me. O, hard fortune, why did I undertake such duty!"

After some time he was aroused by something passing over his body, and opening his eyes he saw a stranger in a cloak attempting to kiss the lady. Springing up, and taking him by the arm, he swung him to the opposite wall.

"Stay there, man of evil design, till the return of the

druidic master. Here I lie at the door to bar your passage."

"It ill beseems a big Amadhān like you to lay hands on a chief. Come from your post I command."

"Yes, at the return of the master."

"I took one of your legs from the druid of the gold cup. I will give it you if you leave the pass free."

Maev, who was listening outside, came in and said,

"Agree to what the chief asks."

"Bring my leg, and let me see how it fits."

He produced it, and it was found full of life.

"Now I am free ; leave the door."

"No, by your hand ; I am worse now with one short and one long leg than I was."

The magic chief fastened on the other.

"Now I demand my reward. Otherwise you shall be sung by every bard in wide Erinn, as the ungrateful Amadhān."

"I value not their lying songs a dry rush. You shall not quit this grianan of the golden castle till the return of its chief. I could not prevent your entrance, I will certainly prevent your departure."

The lady of the fort and the wife of the Amadhān raised their voices against this resolution, but the huge gaisca was deaf to their words. At last the man in the cloak flung it off, and there stood the druid of the White Dog and of Dun an Oir. He seized the Amadhān in his arms, and kissed him on both cheeks, and tears began to fall from the eyes of Maev.

"Thou faithful man" said the druid, "it was I who gave thee the enchanted drink, and did all the rest to have thee for a dweller in my fort. Now when I choose I can go to chase the wolves and deer from Loch Lene to the sea of Moyle. When I am fatigued and remain at home to rest, you may go in search of adventures. I will be as faithful a guardian to thy wife as you were of mine. While all are in the dun together, we shall be as happy as friendship, and love, and the wine and mead cup, and the songs of the travelling bards can make us."

This is properly a household tale of all countries : in its recital speaker and audience equally rejoiced at the triumph of simplicity and fidelity even when combined with weak intellect.

THE ADVENTURES OF CONALL GULBAN.

NIALl of the Nine Hostages was a great sailor and carrier of captives from Britain, and Gaul, and Spain, and Italy, and when he was in this last country, he married the sister of the king. Her name was *Rainea* (agreeable), and she bore her husband eight sons: Laéré, Eané, Mainé, Eogan, (Owen), two Conalls, and two Cairbres. Conall was sent to be educated to the druid of Binn Edair (Howth), and on a day of the days he brought him to a big grey stone on the side of the hill that looks to Bal'-a-clia. "Put wind under that stone, *a vic*" (my son), said he, and he did raise it from the ground, but it was with hardship. "Another twelvemonth will do it," said he, and they still staid together. That day twelvemonth he took up the stone and put it on his shoulder; he walked up the hill with it, and down the hill with it, and laid it again in its place. "You will do now," said he, "for your arms: let us try your legs. Pull up that young oak and strike me with it before I get to the hill top." He did so, and fast as the druid ran, faster ran Conall, and I would not like to get the blows he received on his back. "I'll go home with you to-morrow, I can do no more for you."

After this, Conall Gulban staid a year at Naas, the court of the King of Leinster, and he fell in love with Dichalla (*Diochallach*, diligent), the young princess, and she fell in love with him. But when he returned to Tara to request leave of his father to propose for her, there were ambassadors just arrived from Italy to ask the King of Ireland for aid against the King of Greece, who was invading his territories. Half the fighting men in all Ireland were collected, and the King of Leinster brought his forces, and the Ard Righ said to his son, "I must leave one of my sons to command the troops that remain, and to protect the women and the very old men and very young people. You are my eldest, and the duty falls on you." And said the King of Leinster, "You wish my daughter for a wife, and you shall have her but not till we return from Italy. The *Fathach Dorcha* (Black Giant) of Lochlann also wishes her for wife, and it's only when she is under my protection or

while she obeys me that I can preserve her from falling into his power. When her first child is born she is safe. She remains at Naas under the guardianship of fifty of the best men of Leinster till I return. You remain on Binn Edair to watch the coast. If she visits you, or you her, the Black Giant will get her in his power."

The Kings and half the heroes of Erin sailed to Italy; Conall Gulban sorrowfully watched the sea from the "Hill of Oaks;" Dichalla sorrowfully used her needle in her grianan in the rath at Naas. Her father had laid geasa on her not to stir from her palace till his return, but he unfortunately did not explain her danger. One day as Conall was sorrowfully gazing over the waters from the highest tulach of the hill, he heard the loud blasts of war bugles to the south, and soon fifty blue-bladed lances were seen advancing through the trees. But his joy was only equal to his terror when he was lifting his betrothed down from her litter, and many loving words were not said, when the black barque of the Fathach Dorcha was seen rushing through the waves, fleeter than the salmon in the water, or the swallow in the air. While you could number ten was all the time he required till coming in a sighe gaoithe, he stood on the grass five paces off. The poised spear of Conall and the fifty blue lances were about to make his body a bloody sieve, but he waved his druidic rod, and the heroes and their arms were lying powerless on the smooth turf.

Dichalla knelt by the side of Conall, and screamed and shrieked, beseeching him to speak to her. "He will be full of life and strength," said the giant, "if you only cut off his little finger, and take a piece of skin off his forehead the size of thy own palm, and dash this stone down between his mouth and nose." "I prefer death," was her answer. "Well, come with me willing or unwilling, but I prefer a wife to a slave. A full year you may remain in your maidenhood. If then you willingly become my wife, well. If not"—he stopped suddenly in his speech, but after a short space spoke again—"fear nothing for the lives of the heroes. In an hour they shall be as they were when their lances were levelled at me." She took off Conall's ring,

replaced it with her own, cut some Oghuim characters on his lance, and thus obliged by a resistless force she was soon speeding over the waters to Lochlann.

Sad and wretched was Conall when he awoke, but when he saw Dichalla's ring on his finger, and read her directions on his spear-shaft, vigour and eagerness returned. He took ship, was within a week in Lochlann, and the next evening before the dun of the Fatha Dorcha. He struck the door with the heavy *hand wood*. A surly face appeared through the central grate, and to him Conall said, "Tell the Fathach that Conall, son of Niall, King of Erin, demands that his betrothed, the fair Dichalla, be given up to him; otherwise battle and conflict on the plain." The attendant went and returned. "The fair Dichalla will not be surrendered to the King of Erin's son. Food, rest, and welcome are his to-night in the bruighean outside the moat, and to-morrow morning a champion shall try his strength and skill.

Conall got food, and drink, and a soft bed, and on the morning appeared with his arms and armour on the plain. He had not long to wait when a young robust warrior issued from the door, gave him the salute of warriors, and till the decline of the sun the dread game of sword, lance, and shield were played. Then was the foeman of Conall beaten behind his shield, and with the next blow laid along on the hard-trodden plain. "What plea have you to make for life?" said Conall. "I care not for life," said the youth. "My father, the Fathach Dorcha, refuses me the hand of the woman I love, and says I must wed a young sorceress, his friend. I prefer death to a life with her." "If I procure your union with your loved one will you be faithful curadh to me all the days of your life?" "I swear to be so by sun, wind, water, and fire." Conall then aided the helpless knight to rise, and they took food and sleep together, and the next morning he struck the battle signal again. He demanded the captive lady once more, but in her stead a tall, strong, but meagre champion presented himself for the strife of heroes. This day's fight was fiercer than that of yesterday; but an hour later than when the young prince of Lochlann fell under his shield, Conall's foot was on the breast of his foe.

"Slay him not," said the prince. "He has long sued for the hand of my sister Cumra, but my father makes refusal. He is called Garna Scathla. He is true curadh to me, and will be no less true to thee." The fallen knight was raised, and led into the bruighean, and the three friends made three equal divisions of the night. In the first they refreshed themselves with food and drink; in the second they entertained themselves with discourse and the chess-table; during the third they slept.

The third battle blow brought out the dark big man, and the fights of the former days were but as the sports of children compared to the strife of this day.

An hour before sunset their broken helms had fallen in pieces from their heads, the shields from their arms, and nought but the hafts of their swords remained in their hands. They seized on each other, body and shoulder, they twisted, they strained, they bent each other back. At last the dark sorcerer by a mighty heave would have flung Conall to the ground, but at the moment his own feet were swept from under him, and the earth shook with the weighty mass which came down on it like a tower.

"If I spare thy life," said the prince of Erinn, "wilt thou restore my betrothed even as you found her at Binn Edair, and give these my sworn curadhs the brides beloved by them?" "I will do that," said the defeated man, "and do you still greater service." So he was raised, and the four entered the dun, and short was the time which passed till Dichalla was pressed to the heart of Conall, and his sworn brothers blessed with the presence of their loving brides.

A feast was made, and in the second division of the night thus spoke the Fathach Dorcha:—"The Kings of Erinn and Leinster are at this moment prisoners in the *daingean* of the King of Greece. All the Grecian soldiers slain in the day are new men on the morning following. We hasten to the aid of Erinn and Italy to-morrow. I renounce all evil magic, but I will avail myself of my full knowledge to aid my friends."

Next day the four warriors and five hundred fighting men were ploughing the sea to Italy in a fleet of twenty barques. They landed and brought great hope to the men

of Erin and Italy, and in the battle which followed they slaughtered whole battalions of the Greeks. When the darkness of night came, the Fathach quitted his tent, and silently proceeded through the field of battle. It was not long till he perceived an aged sorceress examining the slain by means of a *chloive solais* (Sword of Light) and pouring some drops of a cordial into the mouth of every Greek soldier whom she found dead or dying. These immediately arose, and hurried silently to their camp, but this night there were but few restored to life. The Fathach seizing on the glaive, divided the witch in two, seized the flask and spent the night restoring the dead of Erin and Italy. Next day a living Greek was not to be seen. A hasty retreat was made before dawn, and a diligent search was made through the morning for the dead and dying persons. The Kings of Erin and of Leinster were discovered, and restored to perfect health, and a week was spent in joy by all. Then the forces of Erin and Lochlann returned home. Three happy marriages followed, and great joy prevailed at the Courts of Lochlann, of Leinster, and of Tara.

Niall Niallach (Nial of the Nine Hostages), A.D. 375, 398, was as much devoted to the capture of foreign youths and maidens to be reduced to the condition of slavery, as any Turkish or Persian official to the acquisition of backsheesh. He visited Gaul and Britain more than once with this selfish object, and on one occasion secured St. Patrick then a mere youth. From his two great sons, Conall and Eogan, are descended the illustrious Clann Conaill (O'Donnells), and Clann Eogain (O'Neills) of Donegal and Tyrone, who have left lasting marks of their heroism and fidelity in the history of their country. J. F. Campbell found more detailed legends concerning Conall Gulban in the Western Highlands and Isles than could probably now be discovered in any part of Ireland.

DEATH OF NIALL, AND A HOUSEHOLD MYSTERY.

ACHY, the young king of Leinster, being ambitious of becoming Ard-Righ, once removed to Tara while Niall was on some piratical expedition, and abode there nine days and nine nights. At the end of that time he was visited by a

druid in great repute, and impressed with the impiety and lawlessness of which he had been guilty—he who even yet had not received the dignity of knighthood to occupy the regal seat of the monarch of Ireland! Being convinced of his guilt, he at once returned home, but unfortunately stopped one night at the house of a druid whose son was cursed with a foul tongue. This youth bestowed such ill language on the prince that, forgetting for the moment the reverence due to the house of his entertainer, he slew him on the spot.

The bereaved father carried his complaint to Tara on the return of Niall, and excited him to such wrath for the double offence that he invaded Achy's province, and was desolating it with fire and sword, till, at the druid's suggestion, he offered to stop proceedings if Achy were given up. The prince, pitying the desolation of his people, voluntarily surrendered himself, and was chained to a large stone which is still to be seen between Kilbride and Tullow. Thither came the druid conducting nine spearmen, but Achy had scarcely got the first puncture from a lance when, roused to fury, he burst the fastenings of his chain, flew on his executioners, wrested a sword from one of them, and within a few seconds some of them were helpless on the ground, and others in swift flight. He made his way to the coast, and finding a vessel, he took his passage in it to Alba, and got refuge at the court of Gavran, Chief of the Irish Dalriads.

During his abode there, his wife, Fælan, and the wife of Gavran, whose name was Ingeanach, were brought to bed at the same hour and in the same chamber. The Leinster lady was delivered of male twins, and the Alban lady of a daughter. All her children already born were girls, and as her husband anxiously longed for a son, she eagerly begged her fellow sufferer to make an exchange. The Irish lady complied, and one of her twins was joyfully welcomed by the Dalriad chief as his son and heir. He gave him the name Eogan; his twin brother was called Randubh (The Handsome Dark One).

When the twins had attained the age of striplings, Niall took it into his head to make an incursion into Gaul for booty. He summoned Gavran to be of the party, and along

with Gavran went his guest, the ex-king of Leinster. In vain Gavran endeavoured to obtain forgiveness for his protégé from the Ard-Righ ; he would not admit him into his presence. Resentment with Achy exceeded even his great courage. It got so completely the upper hand of all other considerations, that as he was taking a lonely walk by the Loire, and caught sight of Niall on the opposite bank, he slew him with a cast of his spear.

Returning to Leinster, he was restored to his former power, and ruled pretty much as other provincial kings. In time Eogan succeeded his supposed father in Alba, and Randubh sat on the Leinster throne. Eogan, taking it into his head that his descent from Cairbre Riadha, grandson of Conn Cead Cathach, and one of the earlier Irish settlers in Argyle, entitled him to the throne of Ireland, gathered a horde of Dalriads, Picts, Loegrians, and Cymry, and descended on the coast of Leinster. He required submission and tribute from Randubh, unless he wished to see his territory given up to fire and sword, and the young prince, feeling his inferiority in forces, was sadly troubled ; but his mother gave him comfort. "Give no answer," said she, "till I pay this invader a visit." She proceeded with but few attendants to his camp, obtained an interview, and boldly demanded by what right he had come in that hostile fashion on a friendly people who had given him no provocation. The king was incensed by her bold language and commanding demeanour, and answered, "I do not feel obliged to give to every cailleach a reason for my conduct." "I am no more a cailleach than your mother," said she. "Dare you put yourself on a line with my mother?" "I do, for I happen to be your mother in person, and you are about oppressing your twin-brother and his subjects," and to her shocked but still incredulous son she revealed the circumstances of his birth and the change of infants.

When he had taken some little time to cool down, he ordered all hostile proceedings to be suspended, and despatched to his mother in Alba a request that she should come to him without delay. On her arrival he questioned her in presence of the dowager queen of Leinster, and was convinced of being the son of this lady, and twin-brother

of Randúbh. Further hostilities were not to be thought of. Strict alliance was entered into, and the secret of Eogan's parentage religiously kept, for fear of his rule over the Argyll Scotts being disputed.



THE FATE OF BREACAN.

BREACAN, though grandson of the powerful monarch, Niall of the Nine Hostages, did not disdain the profession of trading merchant. He owned fifty *currachs* (skin-covered boats), and performed voyages innumerable between Erinn and Alba, but at last he and his currachs were lost in a whirlpool, which broke into fury in the sea of Moyle. There was no certainty of the misfortune on either side of that channel for many years, till it was discovered in this wise. The blind poet Lucha, paying a visit to Bennchuir (Bangor), in Down, his attendants, during an hour of relaxation, strayed down to the strand, and in their promenade came on the bleached skull of a small dog. Having no graver concern on their hands at the time, they brought the poor relic to the poet, and requested him to reveal to them to whom it had belonged when alive. "Lay the poet's wand on the skull," said he, and then he pronounced some mystical words belonging to the spell called *teinm laegha*, applying his forehead to the other end of the rod. In a few seconds he spoke aloud—

"The tempestuous waters, the waters of the Vortex,
Destroyed Breacan ; this is the skull of Breacan's lap-dog ;
And but little of greatness here remains,
For Breacan and his people were drowned in the Vortex,"

i.e., the *coire Breacain* (Breacan's vortex), which name marked the place for ages afterwards.

This tradition is found in a note on the *Senchus Mor*, or body of Brehon Laws, vol. ii. It is there referred to as furnishing an illustration of a species of pagan divination interdicted by St. Patrick.

Besides those pious men who undertook, through good motives, to write the lives of their holy predecessors, there were others belonging to the class of bards and story tellers, who, treating the level portions of the narrative with neglect, seized on every thing bordering on the supernatural, and used it to amaze their hearers, as they would use magical incidents in their ordinary stock pieces. The meek servant of God often became in the hands of the *Scealluidhe* as stern and vengeful as if he was an unbaptized Corsican. Hence so many bizarre circumstances have become incorporated with the traditional biographies of holy labourers in God's vineyard. Sometimes we come at veins of genuine poetry and romance varying the mingled tissues of truth and fiction. The accounts tampered with by bard or story-tellers are more congenial to a work such as ours than a dry authentic narrative given by Rev. Alban Butler after a careful examination and comparison of his authorities. Among the scanty stock here quoted, preference must be given to matters relating to St. Patrick. A more ample collection will be found in *Legendary Fictions of the Irish Celts*.



HOW IT FARED WITH THE CHIEF OF CASTLE KNOC.

MURINUS, chief of Cnuca, near Dublin, was among the number of those who neglected to turn the visit of St. Patrick to good account. When he was informed of the approach of the saint to his rath, he told one of his giollas to say that he was out hunting. "I shall call again," was the answer modestly delivered. The next day on making his appearance, the same unworthy follower said his master was at dinner, and would not be disturbed. The third day the visitor took care to avoid the dinner hour. "Murinus," said the same attendant, "has lain down to rest and desires to be excused." "Go to Murinus," said the patient man of God, "and say to him, if he receives me not at this hour, he shall never see me here or hereafter." The giolla went in, and soon re-appeared with the assurance that Murinus would not interrupt his needful repose for any person or any business. Patrick went sorrowfully away, and the giolla on returning to his master's apartment, found only his master's lifeless body.

ST. PATRICK'S FIRST VISIT TO DUBLIN.

THE first glimpse the saint had of the "Town of the Hurdle-Ford" was from the high ground of Finglas. He stopped at that place for some minutes, and prayed for blessings on the future Irish capital. A poor woman afforded him a lodging while he remained in the town, and he more than once heard her complain of the difficulty of procuring good water. She dwelt on the edge of the salt marsh which extended at that time to the present site of College-green, and was obliged to go a long way to procure fresh water. The saint pitying the charitable creature, struck the ground near her hut with his staff, and a spring gushed forth, known to the close of last century as St. Patrick's Well. If a fervent archæologist wishes to gaze on and taste its waters he has only to scale the rails of the College Park, opposite Dawson-street, and fall to with pick and shovel just at that point.

Leifé, daughter of the petty king of the district, was found drowned in the river, and the disconsolate father besought the saint's prayers for her restoration to life, promising in that case to embrace Christianity and induce all his people to follow his example. Her life was granted to the prayers of our saint, and the king kept his word. The river was hence-forward called Abhan Leifé (Leifé's River).



HOW ARMAGH CATHEDRAL WAS BEGUN.

A CHIEF named Dairé who owned Drumsaileach (Hill of Sallows), now Armagh, bestowed a small field on the saint; but Dairé's covetous steward put one of his master's horses to graze on it. Next morning the animal was found dead, and Dairé being angered against the saint by the wicked steward, gave orders to have his people turned out of the field, and the huts built for the workmen to be levelled. Just as the messengers were leaving the fort, Dairé was seized with violent pains, and what they were next directed to do was to beseech the saint to come and relieve him. This was done, and the saint and dependents were hence-

forward left undisturbed. Moreover, several strong men arrived in the field next morning bearing a large cauldron, a very acceptable present to Patrick, for he had many men employed in building chapels and hospitals, and hundreds were flocking to him to be baptized or cured, and food was to be cooked for all these. "What did he say when you presented the cauldron?" inquired Dairé of his men on their return. "Nothing but *Do Gratias Dairé*" (I thank Dairé) was the answer. "Ungrateful man!" said the offended chief; "Go and bring it away from him." They did so, and returned with the huge pot. "Well, what did he choose to say when he saw you shouldering the cauldron?" "'Do Gratias Dairé,' the very words he said before." "And he did not seem offended?" "Not a whit." "He must be a true son of Heaven. Go, and request him to come up—but no. It is more fitting that I should wait on him."

Dairé's business this time was to invite the saint to select a suitable piece of ground for his intended cathedral. Accompanied by many persons they went over different places in the neighbourhood of the fortress, the saint seeming to search for some mark or other. At last as they were passing a thicket, up started a doe from her lair, where she had just been suckling her fawn. Some rushed forward to seize them, others were about launching their spears, but both sprung towards the saint, and stood fearlessly by his side. He took up the young thing in his arms, and followed by its dam and the assembled company, he traced the boundary of the future cathedral. The name of the hill was thenceforward changed to Ardmacha (High Field).



DEATH OF MILCHO.

ONE of St. Patrick's most anxious wishes on his arrival in the north of Ireland, was the conversion of his former master Milcho from paganism and its attendant vices. Milcho had a dream while his benefactor was approaching, and in it saw his two little daughters consumed by flames that

issued out of the mouth of his former slave. As he awoke he was told by the watchman that a man of venerable looks in a strange dress was approaching. Overcome by contempt and hatred for his ancient swineherd, and fear that he might be converted if he came to speech with him, as he had already heard of his persuasive powers, he sent every living soul out of the wooden house, collected dry brushwood, set it on fire, flung himself into the kindled heap, and miserably perished. Patrick's grief was extreme, when he caught sight of the burning dwelling. He protected and instructed the little orphans, and in time they became saints, thus fulfilling in figure their unhappy father's dream.



THE THIEVISH GLUTTON JUDGED OUT OF HIS OWN MOUTH.

IN St. Patrick's weary journeys (say A. D. 432-460) he found a faithful and useful assistant in a stout he-goat which would carry a wallet and its contents without the slightest murmur or complaint. While the saint was arduously employed one day at his sacred labours, a triple-dyed rascal stole the poor animal, killed him, and ate a piece of his flesh with the least possible delay. On being missed, there were hundreds of men, women, and children, immediately on the quest, and the thief "was taken in the manner." Being brought before the chief brehon he stoutly denied his guilt three several times, but just as the last denial was trembling on his tongue, the bleating of a goat was heard proceeding from his stomach, and from his mouth issued the long and strong white beard which had belonged to the poor murdered animal. Go where he would, the bleating and the beard attended him to his dying day. The brehon adjudged him no additional punishment.



THE PRINCESSES AT THE WELL.

THE saint and his beloved disciple, Benignus, in their

journey through Conacht, stopped one sunshiny morning at a spring well, from which the two princesses from the neighbouring royal *lios* were accustomed to bring home water in pitchers balanced on their shoulders or heads. On this morning they paused at a distance while the holy men were reciting and singing the psalms. The sounds and the music filled their innocent minds with rapture, and when the service was at an end they modestly approached, and said, "Tell us, O fathers, what gods you have been worshipping. Is it bright Beal or the beautiful moon, or the gods of the hills, the forests, the lakes, or the streams?" "None of these have we been worshipping, my daughters, for there is no Divinity but One, and he made the sun, the moon, the hills, the forests, and the waters, for the use of man, whom he created last of all." Their minds being already disposed to receive the truth, they were instructed and baptised on the same morning, and their household came over to the faith with them.

Soon after, they became sick unto death, and the holy man being sent for, came and comforted them. They wished not for longer sojourn on earth; they longed for the light and the enjoyment of the Saviour in His kingdom. Their faithful but still unconverted druid preceptors were sunk in affliction for losing them, but they spoke words of consolation to them. "You are yet wandering in the shades of error, but if we call you to us when we are in the bosom of our Lord, will you not hearken?" "Oh, we will—we will!" The beauty of the dying ladies had faded, though not disappeared, in illness, but when the long sleep fell on them, an angelic beauty spread again over the lately sunken features, and the sorrowing druids, gazing on this cheering sight, fell on their knees, and within their hearts they heard the sweet voices of their pupils calling to them from Paradise to embrace the faith which would one day reunite them again. "Our happiness," said the voices, "is such as we cannot declare, nor mortal mind conceive. Hasten to enter into it." Before the holy missionary left the palace he received both into the fold of Christ.

SAINT BRIGID'S CHARITY.

THIS lady of eminent sancity, one of the saintly Triad of Erinn (close of fifth century), was daughter of the learned druid, Duthach, who was converted by St. Patrick on his first visit to Teamar, and who afterwards assisted in compiling the *Senchus Mhor* or great Body of Laws. An important druidic function was the preservation of a fire that should never be allowed to burn out. The early missionaries never interfered with customs harmless in themselves. In some cases they merely changed the direction of devotional acts from the rural deities of forest, hill, or lake to some saint. So it is said that St. Brigid and her nuns kept up at their nunnery in Kildare (Church of the Oak) a perpetual flame burning before the Eucharist. One of St. Brigid's virtues was unbounded charity. She sometimes parted with the church-plate to relieve the poor, and when the King of Leinster expostulated with her for selling a magnificent sword which he had presented to her father, she answered, that she not only had sold the sword, but if she thought it was not displeasing to God she would sell him (the king) and her father into the bargain, to feed the hungry and clothe the naked !



THE BLIND NUN.

AMONG our saint's sisterhood was a meek devout creature named Daria, who had been blind from her birth. She had often heard conversations partly incomprehensible to her, and which no efforts of the speaker could render intelligible. So she said to her abbess one evening, "Dear mother, I am curious to obtain if only for a moment, that gift of sight I hear spoken of, in order that I may have a better idea of God's work." The saint obtained at once the gift of sight for her companion, and during the few minutes that followed there was displayed to her perception, not only the scene before her, but the general economy of the earth by land and sea, and the appearance presented

by the different relations of sun, moon, and earth, to each other at different seasons. Having drunk all this in by her new sense, she said, "Now, dear mother, let me be blind for evermore. What I have seen would distract me too much; the less we are with the world, the more we are with God." So she voluntarily continued blind till her dying day.



THE AMHRA OF COLUM CILLE.

THERE were certain hymns of which the praises of this or that saint formed a portion. These were called "*Amhra*," and their recital was to be attended by the happiest results if the reciter was at the time in a fitting state. One of the most noted of the *Amhra* was composed on the following occasion.

The bards had become so tyrannical and exacting in the sixth century that the kings of Ireland in council assembled, were for extinguishing the order altogether. St. Colum Cillé, however, who was sensible of the good as well as the evil inherent in the institution, exerted himself so vigorously in their favour (having crossed the seas from Iona expressly for the purpose), that the royal displeasure was satisfied for the time with thinning their numbers and setting stringent bounds to their claims. The chief of the bards then assembled at Tara was Dallan Forgall (Blind Forgall). Inspired by gratitude for the deliverance of his order from the threatened ruin, he burst into a spontaneous tribute of praise to the (erewhile) hot-tempered and always patriotic saint. So eloquent, and poetic, and flattering was the improvised eulogy, that the humble saint, finding himself invaded by self-complacency, ordered the bard to suspend his *Amhra* on the moment.

On the death of the saint the blind bard, feeling no further scruple, completed his hymn, which issuing from a spirit intensely devout, charmed all hearts and obtained for its composer the gift of sight! The belief became general, that whoever committed it to memory and piously repeated

it, would be blessed with a happy death. We now quote Colgan.

“With time the devotion of the faithful towards the Amhra having augmented, the ill-instructed began to mistake the true meaning of the promise made to Forgall, and to imagine that the greatest reprobates, without either conversion or repentance, had nothing to do but chant the Amhra of Colum Cillé every day in order to secure salvation. So a miracle took place, which while it strengthened the confidence of the faithful in the hymn, showed in what manner we should understand the privileges conferred by God on his saints.

“A certain man given up to vice, but yet desirous to save his soul, took into his head to learn the famous Amhra. He succeeded in getting half of it by heart, but could not with all his efforts retain the rest. While he vigorously strove at his task in order to be saved, he never once thought of conversion. At last he betook himself to the tomb of St. Colum Cillé, fasted, watched, and passed a whole night in making wonderful efforts of memory; and lo! next morning he had full possession of the second part, and sung it with joyful energy. All in vain—the first part had completely escaped his recollection.”



THE LEGEND OF ST. EFFLAMM.

EFFLAMM son of one Irish king, and Enora daughter of another, were importuned by their relatives to select partners for life among their acquaintance. Each felt a vocation for a life of religious celibacy, but being sadly pressed, selected each other from motives of esteem. However, after the marriage ceremony was performed, and while the guests were enjoying the social festival, night came, and every one began to ask of his neighbour where the bridegroom was amusing himself. They first asked, and then they searched, but poor Enora found herself that night, and for some succeeding ones, a widowed bride. Efflamm had found the idea of a worldly married life so insupportable

even with the saintly Enora, that taking the road, he used his time so well, that he found himself very soon at the sea shore. There was no conveyance at hand but an old box-shaped boat, half filled with water. Nothing dismayed, he stepped into it and was borne to the coast of Lanyonn in Brittany. On his landing, he found King Arthur at deadly strife with a dragon who had almost depopulated the country. At the moment the champion was ready to drop through thirst and fatigue, but the saint touching a rock with his wand, there gushed forth a spring which refreshing the king and renewing his strength, he slew the monster. A splendid position was offered to the saint at Arthur's Court, but he preferred remaining at Lanyonn in a hermitage, and all the time that—after his religious exercises—remained at his disposal, he devoted to the service of the surrounding people. Enora at first wept and sorrowed, then resigned herself to what had been ordained. One night she had a vision of angels bearing her across the seas, and when her eyes opened she found herself on an unknown coast and lying before a hermitage fashioned in the hollow of a rock. Knocking gently at the door, it was opened, and her hand clasped by that of her husband. He was soon busily employed in fitting up a rude dwelling for her in the cavern of a neighbouring rock, and there united in devout affection but living apart, the rest of their pious and active lives were spent. Men and women visiting the two cells on a certain morning when the saints were advanced in years, found both dead, and their countenances lighted with an expression of unspeakable happiness. Efflamm and Enora are the Patron Saints of that part of Brittany. The Bretons to this day regard Ireland with gratitude and respect for the many holy men whom it sent to them in former times.



LEGEND OF THE CATHACH.

ST. COLUMBA, of the royal race of Niall of the Hostages (A.D. 519-596), being on a visit to St. Finnan, of Ulster,

borrowed his Book of the Psalms, and made a careful copy of it at extra-official hours. The owner of the book was apprized of what was doing, but made no sign till the last letter was formed. He then sent a message to the zealous scribe, with a demand for his handy-work, it being a copy made without leave asked or obtained. It may be well supposed that such a request would not be readily complied with. St Colum would not resign his hardily-earned prize, and appealed to Diarmuidh, King of Ireland. He, sitting on his royal seat, taking the book in hand, and looking on the two claimants, pronounced this decision, which passed afterwards into a proverb:—" *Le gach boin a boinin*—'To every cow (belongeth) her little cow' (calf). To every book belongeth its copy. Your copy, *O Colum Cillé*, belongeth to Finnan."

"That is an unjust decision, O Diarmuidh," said the aggrieved saint.

At this time, the son of the King of Conacht, an hostage at the court, being engaged in a hurling match with the king's steward, and a dispute arising, he killed him with a blow of his *comaun*. This offence, occurring within the royal precincts, could not be condoned by any eric. The youth was forced from the arms of Colum Cillé, and executed. Diarmuidh, dreading the resentment of the saint for this new offence, had him narrowly watched, but he miraculously escaped the vigilance of his guards, and was next found among his own *Sliochd* in Donegal.

On hearing the affronts offered him, the Cinel Conaill (O'Donnells) and the Cinel Eoghain (the O'Neils) united their forces, and marched to join those of the Conacht monarch, Achy, at Cuil Dreimné, near Sligo. There the allies met the troops of the Ard-Righ, routed them with great slaughter, and drove them back in evil plight to Teamur.

After some time the saint and monarch were reconciled, but the latter felt the sacrifice of life at Cuil Dreimné, and all the consequences of his resentment, press heavily on his conscience. Going to confession to St. Molais, in Devenish Island in Loch Erne, he was enjoined, by way of penance, to quit Erinn, and never look on its soil or herbage again.

He set sail for Alba, with several companions, landed at Iona, built the monastery in whose cemetery repose the ashes of many Pictish, Scottish, and Scandinavian kings, and established Christianity among the Pictish race. Being at a later day requested to assist at a council in Tara held to consider the toleration or suppression of the insolent Bardic body, he complied, but kept a cloth over his eyes from the moment he left his beloved Hy till he again touched its strand.

There is another legendary instance of St. Columba's great regard for books. Hearing of a considerable number of those treasured articles in the possession of a certain ecclesiastic, he paid him a visit, but the host not relishing the idea of the saintly *Helluo Librorum* let loose among his vellum-treasures, did not indulge him with so much as a sight of a clasp or cover. The visitor was so incensed, that he wished the miserly master might not have the comfort of reading a line in one of his books, *usque ad articulum mortis*, and if the bard who recorded the fact told no lie, the wish was accomplished. We have forgotten the particulars of this edifying legend, but, as our peasants say, "There was more lost at Aughrim."

The bards and story-tellers were in bad odour with zealous churchmen on account of their generally licentious and irreligious lives. These worthies took vengeance after a way of their own when they found opportunities of introducing saints into their stories, by representing them subject to revengeful and other unamiable feelings. The Norman French Trouveres gave their ghostly counsellors still harder usage in the *Fabliaux*.

THE VOYAGE OF ST. BRENDAN.

TOWARDS the end of the fifth century the three isles of Arran were held by a chief named Corbanus, who rendered fealty for them to Ængus, king of Munster. Enda, brother of this king, wished to devote his life to God's service in praying and labouring with his hands. He induced many other well-disposed men to join him; and at his request his

brother gave to himself and his little community possession of Arranmore, allowing Corbanus other and more valuable possessions. This chief being a heathen did not look on the new settlers with much favour. He stood on the shore of Ireland as Enda and his people were about steering in their corrachs for their new possessions, and cried out in derision, "Holy man, here are several vessels of grain which I intended to bestow on you. They will be of great use in sowing your barren territory, but your boats are too slight, and too well filled to receive them; perhaps the gods whom you worship will convey them across without giving you any trouble." The saint cast a look of sorrow and reproach on the chief, and then betook himself to prayer. Corbanus's triumph was but short: he saw the vessels rise from the earth and shoot rapidly in an upward sloping direction over the boats and over the heads of the monks who occupied them, and so on directly to the platform above the landing-place of Arranmore. It need scarcely be told that St. Enda and his monks chanted hymns of gratitude on their landing; but the conversion or non-conversion of Corbanus has been left in doubt by the old chroniclers.

And now our labourers in the holy vineyard diligently commenced the good work; churches and monasteries soon arose under their hands; and then whoever was not engaged in repeating the Holy Office, or singing divine hymns, was labouring at the cultivation of the land, or slowly and carefully copying out Missals or some book of the Testaments, or training pupils in the literary exercises of the day; and their long and healthy lives seemed to them too short for all the work they wished to perfect for the glory of God and the good of their neighbour.

St. Fanchea, the sister of St. Enda, once paid a visit to her brother, accompanied by three of her nuns. She could not but be much edified by the devout and well-spent lives of the holy islanders; and when she was taking leave, she would not allow a single individual to quit his occupation for the purpose of rowing her to the continent. She made the sign of the Cross on the waves; and then spreading her mantle thereon, she and her three nuns took their places on it, and went gliding across the rough waters of

the bay to the nearest point on the continent, as the islanders then and now consider the coast of Ireland. One corner of the cloak was observed to sink a little below the surface of the water ; and St. Fanchea, a little surprised, asked the sister who occupied it what could be the cause. "I know not," said she, "unless it be that I am bringing from the island a little pipkin, which I thought would be of service in our kitchen." "You have sinned by covetousness, dear sister," said the saint ; "throw away the occasion of it." She dropped the vessel into the waves readily indeed, but with a little natural reluctance, and the cloak became as smooth as the surface of a table.

As St. Enda was one day sitting on a cliff at the south-eastern side of the island, enjoying the sight of the waves rushing in from the "old sea," and dancing under the unclouded sunny air, the northern steep cliffs of the other isles forming the only shade in the picture, he became aware of a corrach sweeping round the western point of the nearer isle, and bearing towards the landing-point of Arranmore. As it approached, he distinguished the gowns and cowls of monks ; and when he received them at the beach he recognised in their chief the holy Abbot Brendan of Ardfert, in Kerry (A. D. 484-577). The meeting between the saintly men was most cordial and edifying to their companions ; and all were soon in the refectory, partaking of a welcome repast of oaten bread, milk, and lettuce, of which the voyagers had some need.

The host was too much rejoiced to have the holy Abbot under his roof to feel any curiosity concerning the cause of his visit ; but his guest, without waiting to be questioned, entered on the subject immediately after the slight meal was concluded.

"Dear brothers, I have been suffering for some time from a strong impulse ; but I am ignorant whether it comes from the workings of my own ill-regulated imagination or if it is inspired by Heaven. It is strongly borne in on my mind that many, many leagues away, towards the setting of the sun, a large island rests in the ever-disturbed old sea, and that men and women of Adam's race are there living as the blessed Patrick found our forefathers not a century

since. If so, is it not clearly our duty to seek out these brothers and sisters, and endeavour to lead them out of the gloom of heathenism into the joyful light of Christian faith?"

Here an aged monk interposed. "I have heard of that island from the time I was a child. They always called it Hy-Breasil; but most of those who spoke of it seemed to think that it was swallowed up by the pitiless waters about two hundred years since, and that it becomes visible once in every seven years. They also told that if any one would approach so near as to fling a lighted brand in on the shore, the island would remain firm above the roar and rush of the waves."

Then said the saint: "From the time that our corrach left the fair strand of Liath (Tralee) in the south, I have passed no house of God's servants without consulting the aged men on this head; and all I have heard agrees with your account. As we entered the rough and swelling frith where old Sionan joins the ocean, in order to visit a religious house on its northern bank, I could see the buildings, the gardens, and the silent streets of a sunk city many fathoms down in the rushing waters; and I said, Oh! that I could converse with one who, when in the flesh, found himself on firm land where our corrach now floats on the treacherous wave! He could give me the information I require. Dear brother Enda, I will make use of your hospitable shelter till to-morrow, when I will renew my quest along the headlands and islets,—the isles of the White Cows, which were once as difficult to be found as Hy-Breasil, till an arrow tipped with fire struck it from a galley; the isle of Clare, of Achil, of Inis na Gloiré, and so round within sight of Ben Gulban,—till I reach the northern isles of Arran and the rocky sea-walls of Tir Conaill."

The visit of the sainted Abbot caused no interruption to the labours or the religious exercises of the monks of Arran. He and his followers joined with them in their duties as if they had lived years on the island; and next morning all thronged the church to be present at St. Brendan's Mass. After the awful moment of consecration, the appearance and demeanour of the celebrant was as if he stood in the visible

presence of his Lord, such was the reverence and rapture that sat on his features ; and for some minutes after the Communion bright rays were seen encircling his head and breast.

When the sacrifice was ended, he spoke to the assembled crowd, intending only to address a short exhortation to them on courage and perseverance in their duties ; but as he spoke, the prophetic spirit took possession of him, and he revealed much of what was to happen to his beloved country in after times.

“ O sight of sorrow ! O sacred isle, which will hereafter be called Arran of the Saints, where labour, prayers, meditation, and holy songs fill up the entire circle of the day,—the time will come upon you when your churches will not be found, and only a few scattered stones show where they once stood. Now, at evening and morning, the air resounds with the music of God’s praises : hereafter, no sound shall be heard but the roar of the waves as they break on the rocks, and the harsh scream of sea birds. Instead of waving fields of yellow corn, on which thousands are fed, the rocky stretch of the isle will scarcely afford sustenance to the wild-goat. Woe to the decay of piety ! woe to the heathen spoiler ! Piety driven from Arran shall revive in the green meadows by the Sionan (Clonmacnois) ; but in generations to succeed nothing shall be left even there but the tombs of forgotten chiefs, the moss-covered ruins of church-walls, and the guardian crosses of the graves. But ‘ Arise, O Lord, and let Thy enemies be scattered ; and let those who hate Thee flee from before Thy face ! ’ As fast as God’s temples are pulled down in one place, they shall rise in another ; and if all were left desolate, the hill-cavern, the deep lonesome glen, or the wild heath shall be Thy temples, O Lord, and the rough rock or flat stone Thy altar. Great empires may perish, great nations even lose the faith ; but this island, hallowed in the persons of Patrick and myriads of sainted men and women, shall preserve that priceless gift till the eve of the destruction, when it will calmly sink in the surrounding seas, and its inhabitants be spared, while still clothed with flesh, the unspeakable terrors of that dreadful day.”

At noon St. Brendan re-embarked; and, having given his benediction to the kneeling hundreds that crowded the shore, bent his course northwards, through islets and islands, and by projecting capes, bringing consolation and gladness to every religious house he visited. The information got in the different stations, though slightly varying, agreed on the whole with what the old monk of Arran gave. We will not accompany him on his northern voyage, nor his return to his monastery in the south. The next thing we find him doing is guiding his galley straight towards the Fortunate Islands, in hopes of finding a favourable current to speed his vessel westwards. Twelve select monks accompanied him; but one of the number, alas, was more intent on the possession of treasures, and on the enjoyment of life in a finer climate, than on bringing the good news of Christianity to the bewildered heathen.

So the galley went southward, and from day to day they felt the air growing warmer round them. The companions of the saint, as well as himself, had a thorough knowledge of the management of a sea-vessel—for all, before entering the religious life, had guided corrachs on the lakes, or the great river of the west, or among the islands that fringe the coast from Cape Kleir to the “Island of the Tower” (Tory). They did not go far enough to find the current, but they found the Fortunate Islands, till now untrodden by man’s foot, though often seen in the dreams of the old poets. Joyfully did they gather the ripe grapes to prepare from these the wine for the Holy Sacrifice; and they laid in a store of cocoa-nuts for provision against the long voyage they still expected. They left no spot without carefully searching for traces of human beings, to whom they might address the words of life. At last they left behind the isles, now called the Azores, and directed their course by the sun; they had as yet met no storm, and the guiding of their galley was a task of little trouble.

Each day was spent as if they were still lodged in their monastery of Ardfert; Mass was celebrated at the third hour (nine a.m.), and all the offices and hymns were recited or sung at their appropriate times. The night watches of three hours each were kept; and thus they proceeded west-

wards, till at length they joyfully descried the hills, the forests, and the shores, of an island, which, on approaching, they might well have taken for paradise, but for the absence of dwellers in human shape.

All the beauties that can arise from sunshine, clear blue skies, mountains green to their summits, shady woods, green sloping meadows, clear lakes, and sparkling streams, were there. Flowers of the most brilliant colours waved on shrubs, and sprung from the short thick herbage; they hung in festoons between the trees, or depended from the branches, gladdening the sight, and giving promise of sweet and refreshing fruit; while birds of the most beautiful and varied plumage entranced the souls of the voyagers by their melody. This melody was of a sacred character; and the natural notes of the little choristers that produced it were as varied as those of the strings of the finest harp.

St. Brendan, judging from the style of the music that there was something supernatural about the beautiful little creatures, adjured them in God's name to explain the mystery. The branches of the tree next him were full of the charming songsters; and as he spoke they ceased their song and one of them returned this answer:

"Holy man, we were all glorious angels at the time now long past, when pride and disobedience entered the heart of the unhappy Lucifer; and though we did not sympathise with his rebellious feelings, we dallied with the temptation, and were flung from heaven in his company. While the arch-enemy and his troops were piercing through the sulphurous waves of hell in their headlong fall, our descent was mercifully stayed by this island, which, bright and beautiful as it appears to you, is drear and desolate to us, who remember heaven. We still perceive the swift passage of our former glorious companions in their way to far-off worlds, to execute the will of the ALL-MIGHTY and ALL-MERCIFUL: we see the shining traces left where they pass. Such happiness and glory is now lost to us; but we do what is mercifully left in our power. We cease not, night and day, joining our voices to those of the heavenly choirs above; and when, in the lapse of years, this island becomes the abode of human beings, and their prayers and hymns begin

to ascend to heaven, we will be permitted to rise with them, and regain that happiness which it is not in our power to explain, nor in yours to comprehend."

As they were leaving the happy island, probably one of the Bermudas, they were told that they would be allowed to return, and spend the next Paschal tide on its shore; and so they resumed their westward course again.

But as they hoped to be nearing the desired land, they met a strong current, which, coming with a mighty rush from the south-west, swept them before it for several days. They began to feel an unwelcome degree of cold: a disagreeable wind came on them from the north-west, a fog enveloped them, and they had no means of judging in what direction they were drifting. While they were thus tossed about at the mercy of the winds and waves, they approached what seemed a low rushy island. They were wearied by the narrow limits of their little vessel; and four of the number went on shore, for the pleasure of walking about at liberty, taking a small cauldron and some fuel with them to prepare a meal.

While one of the party blew up his fire, the others walked about to stretch their limbs. They were rather surprised at the slimy elastic surface of the ground, and the hard sharp sort of grass—if grass it could be called—which it produced; but their surprise was soon changed to terror; for, as they returned towards the fire-place, they found the soil heaving, the cauldron tumbling over, and the fire scattering on every side. There was no time to be lost: they hastened to the brink of the treacherous island, and scrambled into their galley. They were scarcely in safety on the hospitable deck, when they beheld the supposed isle move rapidly away, and the remnants of the fire flung on every side, with the convulsive heavings of the spot on which it had been lighted. They now judged that they had intruded on the repose of some sea-monster; and immediately falling on their knees, they returned fervent thanks for their preservation.

Still the fog surrounded them, and still the vessel kept on its confused and uncertain course; and at times they were swept along by furious gusts of wind, now darting

down the steep side of a mountain-like wave, and then shooting up the ascent of the next, with a force seemingly sufficient to launch the ship into the clouds. At last they perceived a lurid light through the thick grey veil that surrounded them; and frightful yells and explosions from the same quarter burst on their terrified ears.

The ship was impelled by the waves in the direction of the noises; and they were soon able to distinguish a conical islet, volumes of fire and black smoke issuing from its summit, and a band of yelling demons hovering round the base of the hill. As soon as they became visible, they flung about their limbs in the wildest manner, yelled terrifically, and roared out these words from their brazen throats: "Welcome, brother! we have long waited for you. Your place is prepared: come, come!" St. Brendan was no more moved by the appalling spectacle than if he was looking on a group of dolphins gamboling on the quiet waves; but the words of the evil spirits took him by surprise. He looked round on his pious companions: the faces of eleven were expressive of awe, but an awe overruled by the calm courage inspired by confidence in their heavenly Master. But, ah! the horror and despair that distorted the countenance of the twelfth! He flung up his arms, roared aloud in the extremity of his anguish, and cursed the hour of his birth.

"Oh, my poor brother" cried the saint, as he looked with pity on the wretched man, "turn away your eyes from the hellish sight: fall on your knees; cry to our Lord for forgiveness of your sins; call on the Mother of Mercy for her intercession: she will stand between you and these monsters of hell."

"Too late, too late!" cried out the unfortunate. "While at home, I lived an unholy and hypocritical life. I sinned secretly; and when I joined your company, it was only to find a pleasant land, treasures of gold and silver, luxurious living, and unholy companions."

"Dear brother, your sins cannot overpower God's mercy. Make an act of contrition, detest your past ill deeds, and fling yourself on the mercy of your Father."

"I cannot; there are my instigators and my companions for eternity."

He sprung from the side of the vessel with hands clenched at the horrible spectres, the dark waves closed over the lost creature, and the volcano and the fiends vanished from the sight of the awed servants of God. For the next twenty-four hours they little heeded the movements of their vessel, nor in what direction it was driven by wind and wave.

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They had now been for several weeks wandering at random in the great waters, far to the northwards of the blessed isle of birds: their stock of fuel was nearly exhausted; snow was falling in abundance, and they were suffering intense cold. The Eve of the Nativity had arrived, and the holy men were devising how they might celebrate the festival in the best way that their circumstances allowed. It was about an hour after noon; and while they were expecting the immediate withdrawal of the feeble light that was abroad, the thick lead-coloured air began to brighten towards the south-west. It seemed as if dense veils were withdrawing one by one from between them and the sun; and in a short time they began to enjoy his light and warmth, of which they had been deprived for weeks. They found themselves near a rocky island, and their joy was much increased by the sight of a man very roughly clad, standing on the shore and making signs to them expressive of the most joyful welcome.

Following the directions which he gave them, they guided their vessel round a point into a harbour naturally formed, where they were enabled to station it alongside of a ledge of smooth rock, which served as a rude but serviceable quay. The unknown gave his assistance; and as soon as St. Brendan was on the land, he threw himself at his feet and embraced his knees with the deepest love and reverence. The saint raised and embraced him; but as if he felt uneasy under the honour conferred on him, he passed to every one of the crew and embraced and welcomed them. "Holy Father and most dear brothers," said he, as soon as he had welcomed each, "let me assist you in bring-

ing the most necessary articles in the vessel to my cavern, which, thank God, is pretty comfortable, and large enough for all. For seven years I have not seen form or face of a brother, nor enjoyed the happiness of being present at Mass. I praise Thee, O my Saviour, with all my powers, for that great benefit which I shall, with Thy divine permission, obtain on this festival of Thy Nativity."

They collected whatever was most needful, and followed their guide and host to his cavern, which, though unpromising enough in outward appearance, was tolerably commodious within, and now rendered cheerful by the presence of a good fire. The hermit's provisions consisted of some dried fish and pure spring-water. The ship's stock of hard cakes was not yet all consumed, and a piece of the hard bread was as acceptable to the recluse as the pure water was to his guests. So, after a couple of hours occupied in the appropriate devotions of the festival-eve, they all sat down, and for the first time that day tasted food.

The vigil was appropriately kept; but few of those who assist once a week at the Holy Sacrifice, with minds and hearts only slightly affected, could conceive the heavenly joy and rapture which took possession of the soul of the recluse as he assisted at the midnight Mass celebrated by St. Brendan. The saint himself was more rapt than usual; and the rest seemed, after the sacrifice was ended, as if awaking from a blissful dream, in which they had been enjoying Paradise.

So they kept up, as well as they could, the twelve days' festivities, being as happy as brotherly love, a lively sense of the immediate protection of Providence, and an all-absorbing love of God could make them. In one of their hours of relaxation, their host gave them an account of what had led to his solitary life on that remote and desolate island.

He had been an inmate of the monastery of Inis-na-Gloiré; and, like the monk whose miserable fate was still so painfully remembered, he had fallen into sins of a deadly nature. Under the influence of remorse and despair he at last ran to the shore, intending to throw himself into the unpyting waves; but before he came to the edge, his will had yielded

to the motion of grace, and despair had given way to contrition. A boat was leaving the little harbour, and he felt inspired to enter it, and commit his after proceedings to Providence. After some days a terrible storm came, and swept the little vessel out of its coasting course into the wide wild deep. In a sudden lurch of the boat he lost his hold on the bulwarks, and he was flung out into the merciless water. He felt that his last hour was come. All the wilfully vicious thoughts that ever had caused him to sin,—all the sinful acts that he had ever committed,—became present to his inward sight at that moment, to drive him to despair; but he invoked Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, and made an act of contrition and of charity. He then seemed as if falling into a delightful slumber; and when his consciousness returned, he found himself lying on the rocks that skirt the landing-place of that isle. After a good deal of exploring, he saw no sign of any kind of food, nor of fire to cook it; and he was about lying down to await death when an otter came up, holding with his sharp teeth a fish, which he dropped at his feet. But how could he kindle a fire? The otter ran before him to the edge of an upright rock, and scratching at its base, exposed to view a couple of hard bright flint stones. Collecting some dry sticks and moss and withered leaves, he lighted a fire by means of his flints, and made a feast on the otter's present. He afterwards discovered the cavern, and, under the promptings of necessity, found means of catching fish and some wild fowl. He had now lived a lonely life on the island for seven years, and as he hoped had his desires and affections weaned from worldly things—his chief regret being his separation from the blessings of public worship and the Sacraments. His deliverance from solitude, and succession to the inheritance of a lost brother, had been revealed to him a long time past. He had now attained the sum of happiness he could fancy to exist on earth, and besought his deliverers to unite their prayers for his perseverance in good.

To the questions of St. Brendan on the existence of a large island yet undiscovered, and probably uninhabited, he answered that an aged monk of Inis-na-Gloiré had assured him that such was the fact, the only doubt being

about the existence of inhabitants. It was not the island called Hy-Breasil, for that and the men and women last living on it were thousands of fathoms below the surface of the old sea.

Early in the spring the waters were mercifully opened, so that the bark was allowed to find its way southwards; and, after a voyage of three weeks, they were permitted the sight of the wooded shore of the long-sought continent. The landing, the joy of the holy men, the celebration of an early Mass on their newly-found territory, cannot be described in detail, nor their after weary and laborious journey through swamp, prairie, thick forest, and stony hills. They held on their toilsome errand westwards, but neither found a human being, nor the traces of one. At last when their bodily powers were prostrate, and the deepening shades under the tall thick-growing trees betokened the approach of night, they beheld, through the stems and brushwood, the slow and turbid waters of a wide river flowing south.

Collecting some dry brushwood, they made a fire, and prepared their frugal supper. When it was over they betook themselves to prayer, and that holy exercise occupied them two hours.

Before disposing themselves to rest for the night, they sat down beside their cheerful wood-fire, and began to take counsel as to what was the next befitting step to take. St. Brendan was about addressing his little devoted band, when the attention of all was attracted by a luminous mass of vapour approaching from the farther bank of the river. As it drew near, it seemed to unfold itself, and presently all were on their knees, and gazing with delight and reverence on an angel glorious in shape and countenance. All feeling of weariness and of disappointment was gone, and their souls were filled with rapture, as he addressed them.

“Faithful workers in your Master’s vineyard, your present labours have come to an end: they are for the moment fruitless, but their intention has rendered them acceptable in the sight of Jehovah. This wide-spreading land will be yet unknown to the people of Christendom for the lapse of ten centuries. Then a heaven-led man

acquainted with your voyage, and following in your track, will arrive on these shores, and myriads of dwellers receive the Gospel of the Saviour. The memory of your wanderings shall remain even till then fresh in the minds of the holy men of Erin. Take now the repose of sleep ; then retrace your way to your remote isle, and work while it is light for your neighbour's salvation and your own."

The angel ceased to speak ; but they enjoyed the entrancing light of his heavenly features for some short space, and then all faded but the ruddy light of their decaying fire. The night passed, and so did many succeeding ones ; and they measured back their woodland course, and found their bark as they had left it, moored in a quiet creek ; and guiding it eastwards, they landed on the blest "Island of the Birds," on the day preceding the Festival of Palms.

The always sweet melody of the birds grew wilder, sweeter, and more heavenly, as the blessed bark approached their shore ; and most delightful and consoling were the communications of the saints and these temporary exiles from Paradise. High Mass was celebrated by St. Brendan and two of his priests, on the great day of the Pasch ; and the assistants remained entranced during the portions in which the spirits sung their hymns,—echoes of those long since heard in heaven. The holy Sacrifice began two hours before noon. To the assistants and celebrants it seemed shorter than an ordinary Mass ; but when it came to an end, the trees were flinging long shadows towards the east.

They did not quit the happy island till after celebrating Pentecost. They then began to feel that the amount of happiness they were enjoying, though of a spiritual nature, was more than behoved a servant of God during his mortal pilgrimage. So they sorrowfully bade adieu to the blessed exiles, and trusted themselves once more to the wide deep. They reached the coast of Erin in safety ; and of the later silent labours of the saint and his holy assistants, there remains but a scanty record. Their days were occupied in labour, in instructing the ignorant, in praying, in converting the few pagans that remained, and

in founding religious houses. An exciting history cannot be constructed out of materials such as these.

Another voyage varied the after-life of our saint ; but it was only a visit to the holy isle of Iona in the Hebrides, to St. Columba, the Apostle of the Pictish nation. He was called to his reward when on a visit to his sister, at her religious house of Clonfert, in Galway. As may be readily supposed, he loved to look on the wild scenery of the wave-worn western coast of his country : the mountain to which he has left his name still enjoys a wide view of the sea-cliffs and the broad Atlantic.

It will readily be believed that the sermons addressed to the more or less learned congregations of our days must differ in some degree from the instructions given to unlettered assemblies of those ages that possessed no printed books, or that were painfully passing from a pagan to a Christian life. Parables, allegories, striking histories, and miraculous events in saints' lives were frequently introduced in the homilies of St. Eloy, St. Hilary, St. Martin, and all the preachers of their eras ; and from time to time these were collected, and written down by monks skilful at the pen, and read on proper occasions, in the chieftain's hall and the monastic refectory. Hence the name "legend" from *legenda*—subjects fit to be read for edification. The most famous collection of this kind is the *Legenda Aurea*, copies of which printed by Caxton, are still extant. The voyage of St. Brendan, originally written for Queen Adelaide, wife of Henry Beauclerc, is preserved in that work ; and the curious may read a poetic version of it in the *Dublin University Magazine* for January, 1848, contributed by Denis Florence Mac Carthy. There is an abridged prose version in the same periodical for May, 1852.

SOME OF KING GUAIRE'S DOINGS.

THIS unlucky monarch ruled Conacht in the sixth century when Diarmuidh was Ard-Righ, and St. Colum Cille preaching the Gospel to the Picts, and establishing his great monastery. In his days the arrogance of the bards took such proportions that at a collection of kings and chiefs held at Tara it was resolved to banish the whole body from the kingdom. However, that would have been putting the use and abuse of a good thing on the same footing ;

so St. Colum Cille and other learned and pious men exerted themselves to such good effect that every chief and king retained one of these sons of song and romantic legend, and punishments were appointed for parties who would take the liberty of going from *lios* to *dun*, as in the days gone by, and laying contributions on the unfortunate possessors. Before this salutary regulation was made, no chief or king suffered more from the unreasonableness of the bardic corporation than Guairé (pr. *Gwaaray*), the soft-hearted King of Conacht, who kept court at Gort. The trials of temper which they inflicted on his easy good nature will be detailed in our paper on the power of satire among our Celtic forefathers; the present story illustrates the misfortunes inflicted on him for his ignorance of the proper relations between justice and generosity.

If a charitable king ever reigned in Erin, that king's name was Guairé. If he was travelling on the highway unprovided with copper or silver, beggars behind him asking for alms, and rich folk before him with much money in their girdles, and little charity in their hearts, he would relieve one party of their useless wealth, relieve the other party from their pressing needs, and relieve himself of his uneasy feelings. On the occasion of giving an entertainment to his nobles, one or two of whom particularly relished a tender beefsteak, he found to his annoyance that he had not in his large demesnes a single cow or ox in condition to furnish his epicurean guests with a desirable relish. What was to be done? Inquiries were made, and not a single gentleman-cowkeeper was furnished with a two-year-old worthy to be served up at the Royal table. At last, tidings were brought of an animal the fittest for his purpose, but it belonged to a poor widow, who would neither give it as a present, nor sell it for any sum that could be offered. Here was a dilemma! The widow woman was offered any sum she chose to name; she was threatened with the displeasure of Guairé; but she remained inflexible; she would not give up her favourite brownie to be sacrificed even by the hand of the Royal butcher. So the privy council was summoned, and as there existed no law in the entire Brehon collection under which the obstinate woman could

be punished, they made a bye-law for their purpose, and confiscated all her goods — the cow, to wit. It was taken from her little byre, led away, and slaughtered. Trusty servants in the royal livery were with her in an hour after the foray, as she was moaning and rocking herself backwards and forwards in her little kitchen ; but though they offered her untold sums of gold and silver, she would not touch a single *screpal* (threepence).

Well, the feast was held, and all praises given to the tender piece of beef, and to the cook's skill in dressing it. The entertainment lasted for three days ; and just as the guests were departing, a herald, with the royal tabard of Tara on his back, presented himself and made open proclamation against the host, " For that he had on the 30th ult., etc., etc., *diabolo suadente*, with malice prepense, and with force and arms — to wit, a thousand spears, a thousand swords, a thousand —, etc., etc., entered, and by force did enter, the Widow Oonagh's premises — to wit, her bawn, her paddock, her byre, her dwellinghouse, her shrubbery, her cabbage-garden, etc., and did then and there, contrary to the statute in that case made and provided, seize, drive off, and abduct a thousand cows, a thousand cattle—to wit, one cow of the statute value of —, etc., etc." Guairé had drunk as much wine as was at all beneficial to his constitution. He looked confidently round on the assembled chiefs, and they would to a man have encouraged their hospitable prince to defy the intermeddling sovereign ; but the herald was present, and perhaps might put a bad construction on their words. So they whispered together, looked at Guairé with contemptuous pity, looked at the herald with much respect, and departed to their own raths like peaceable and prudent fathers of families.

Poor Guairé now saw his standing with very distinct and painful clearness ; and, after a few moments' sad reflection, he addressed the herald :—" Tell Diarmuidh, the Ard-Righ, that had I forces on whom I could depend, I would maintain my rights to the last drop of my blood, but I am deserted as you see. So, not to be the cause of one unnecessary death, I deliver you my crown, my belt, and my sword,

to be laid at the foot of the throne, and I release my subjects from all present and future allegiance to myself."

He quitted his palace, and wandered along, oppressed with sorrow and shame. He took no note of time or place, and at the fall of night he found himself at the bawn-gate of a little cabin, wearied, hungry, and dispirited. He entered the house, and asked the mistress for something to eat, and for leave to sleep under her roof that night. "I will give you a piece of dry bread," said she, "and welcome to a night's rest, but neither milk nor butter to relish your fare, thanks to our king's advisers." "Are you the widow woman whose cow was taken to furnish the king's feast?" "I am, indeed." "Then, if you are so disposed, you may rejoice in his punishment; he is your lodger for this night. Why was revenge so sweet to you that you should take your complaint to Tara?" "I did nothing of the kind, my sovereign. Some ill-disposed and concealed enemy of yours has indulged his spite, and obtained his reward. You are still my king, and I must endeavour to provide for your supper something better than a dry oaten cake." She threw on her cloak, and might have been absent about a quarter of an hour when the moody king heard shouts at a little distance from the cabin. Running out, and hastening in the direction of the cries, he found his hostess up to her hips in the stream, holding a strong salmon by the gills, and using her strongest arguments to induce him to come on shore. With the king's assistance, he was forced from his element, and he furnished an agreeable relish to the supper of Guairé and his good-natured hostess.

After a week's wandering, Guairé got completely sick of his scrambling existence, and repaired to Tara. It was easier to get an audience from a sovereign in the sixth century than from a squireen of the nineteenth. The Ard-Righ occupied a raised seat in an open hall at certain hours, and everyone that had need approached the throne in their turn. He recognised Guairé when he entered the hall, and beckoned him to advance. He approached, and bending the left knee, he saluted the sovereign, and resigned himself to his disposal. "You acknowledge the wrong you did to the poor woman?" "I do, noble Diarmuidh." "You have

acted as Ahab to Naboth, and as the rich man in the parable addressed to David, and as David himself." "I have, my king." "Then place this sword between your teeth, acknowledge your offence anew, and repeat your vows of fidelity to the chief king of Erin; for you would have entered into contention and conflict with him if you had been supported." "I would have done that." So poor Guairé, being obliged to lay aside his wide cloak with its curiously-wrought brooch, his Phrygian bonnet, and his many-plaited saffron tunic, and go on his knees, repeated the hard lesson with a naked sword between his teeth; and after the operation, he was left in that uncomfortable state for a quarter of an hour.

The Ard-Righ left the hall before the expiration of Guairé's penance. When the quarter of an hour had elapsed he was shown into a room where a pile of oat-cakes, a haunch of venison, and a flagon of wine were disposed on the table. He was invited to fall to, and required no second call, for he was unmistakably hungry. This meal was scarcely over when a sly-looking bard presented himself, and knowing Guairé's generous disposition, entertained him with an account of the niggardly style in which he was supported at court. "Would you believe it, most munificent Guairé, I that can repeat one hundred and fifty stories and poems enjoy no better state than the mere master of fifty, and you could not distinguish my gilly and my steed from those of the unlettered bodach of the field?" He continued some minutes to enlarge on his neglected and impoverished condition, and finally hinted that a present from the munificent ex-king would meet with much welcome.

The shortest road to his girdle was well known to the right hand of Guairé, but in this instance it did not even commence the journey. He had got a severe lesson on the folly of injuring himself or others by gratifying the worthless or extravagant, so he gave a flat refusal to the man of the one hundred and fifty tales. That worthy went away muttering, and was soon succeeded by a miserable object, a leper, who implored his charity. Guairé had no coins in his pouch, so he handed him the richly-carved gold brooch that held his mantle at the neck. The poor creature with-

drew, imploring blessings on his generous patron, but was back in a few minutes wringing his hands and bestowing every vile name he could recollect on the rascally poet who had waylaid him, and robbed him of his brooch. The only thing now left to Guairé to give away was the studded belt which fastened his tunic at the waist, and this he freely parted with, beseeching the leper to guard it well, as he now had not in his possession so much as a screpal to bestow in charity. It is probable that King Diarmuidh was at the heart of all this annoyance, as he had determined to probe Guairé's disposition to the quick.

The ex-king felt himself under no restraint—at least, none that he could perceive—and he was a daily guest at the table of the Ard-Righ, who, in this unrestrained intercourse, was able to sound the charity and simple-heartedness of his guest, and his want of ambition. The great assembly of Tailtean was visited by the monarch and his court; and there Guairé witnessed many an engagement of marriage and many a contract of service for the coming year, and was a spectator of the knightly contests for which the assembly had been celebrated since the days of Lucha, King of the Danaans. He was furnished with a well-filled purse on setting out for the meeting; but you may guess his chagrin (or rather you cannot guess it), at not finding, through the length and breadth of the fair, a beggar who would condescend to ask him for relief. This was hard enough to bear for the first day; but on the evening of the second day he found it unendurable, and on the morning of the third day he was unable to rise from his bed. He begged for a confessor, as he considered death to be at hand; but King Diarmuidh paying him a visit, requested him to come to the assembly with him the third day, promising him the aid of an infallible doctor, who was sure to be on the spot.

This day he was scarcely out of his palace when he was secured by his patrons, the beggars. Heart and girdle-purse began to be lightened alike, and by sunset there was not a healthier or happier man in the old field of Tailtean.

A week from that day the neighbourhood of the old palace of Gort was in an excited and crowded state, for the

Ard-Righ of Erin was lodged within, and was expected to announce within an hour the new king of the province to its assembled nobles and duine-uasals. At noon all were assembled within the great hall; Guairé was sitting at some distance from the throne, and the widow and the informer were both present. Diarmuidh made a short speech, standing in front of the royal seat. He commended the independence of the widow, the apparent public spirit of the informer, the prudence of the chiefs, and passed just censure on the unthinking and disloyal conduct of the king. "Perhaps," added he, "my loyal people may think the resolution I have arrived at not very consistent with these remarks; but I assure them I have given more than one day to the consideration of the matter, and am sorry that I have not time to explain the processes by which my resolution has been shaped. This it is: Guairé I reinstate in his power, on the condition of his being guided by the opinions of his wise councillors in his future charities; and to his free will and discretion, as to life, death, fine, or imprisonment, I resign the obstinate widow and the disinterested informer."

A shout of joy and triumph rose from every part of the hall except the bench occupied by the prudent chiefs. The Ard-Righ conducted Guairé to his old seat of dignity, and strained him in a cordial embrace. He gave a hearty kiss to the blushing widow on each cheek, dismissed the assembly till dinner would be ready, and after a sojourn of two days, left behind him the happiest king and subjects in Christendom. The widow lived for the rest of her days within the precincts of the Royal Rath, a governess of the king's byres, and the informer comforted himself as well as he could by the approval of his own conscience!



THE ROAD OF THE DISHES.

GUAIRE was as dear to the old Irish story-tellers as the Caliph Haroun Alraschid to those of Mecca or Grand Cairo. Our present legend has, however, little to do with the

doings of the king, the chief incident having reference to his sainted brother Mochua, and occurring at an Easter tide after his restoration.

The last week of Lent had come to the dwellers at the court of Guairé at Durlus, many of whom had found the abstinence from flesh rather trying to their mere sensual natures. Three or four sons of chiefs who were enthusiastic chasers of the deer as well as admirers of its flesh when nicely cooked, were sauntering leisurely through the adjoining forest one of the days of Holy Week, and entertaining some rather selfish aspirations that the strict season might quickly conclude, and afford them the gratification of indulging in their beloved sport, as well as of tasting juicy venison again, when all at once they caught sight of a noble buck dashing through the trees at a short distance from them. They were aware of the orders given by the king that during Holy Week no wild animal should be slain, and with the exception of a single spear, no one in the group was provided with arms. Under the sudden surprise, however, all cast eager glances at this weapon and its holder, and he under a strong impulse dashed forward a few perches, and suddenly stopping, and poising his lance, launched it with such force and skill, that the next moment the fleet and spirited animal was struggling in the death-pang.

The triumph of the little party was dashed with chagrin. Their consciences accused them of disobedience, or sympathy with the disobedience, but they agreed to say nothing of the exploit, and to trust to some lucky accident for the skilful cooking of the game for their Easter dinner, and escape from being obliged to account for its capture.

The holy morning came with its enlivening devotions, its welcome breakfast, and its no less welcome relaxations ; and when dinner hour arrived, and the joints of meat were arranged on the large table, and the company prepared to take their seats, the venison about whose acquisition some mystery lingered, attracted more eyes than any other portion of the feast.

At that moment a scene of a different character was passing in the cell of St. Mochua, the king's brother, who

dwelt in a cell five miles distant from the palace at Durlus Guairé. The self-denying man had passed the Lent in acts of devotion, eating nothing during the time but scraps of barley bread, and water cress, when absolute need was felt. Even now when the time for fast and abstinence had passed away, and his morning devotions and his Paschal Mass were finished, he showed no sign of exhaustion, or wish for feasting, for which indeed there had been no provision made.

If the saint seemed unconscious of want of refreshment, or the unlikelihood of procuring it, it was a different matter with his attendant clerk, who having courageously endured the barley bread and the cress for nearly seven weeks, now felt the desirability of a decent meal of bread and a piece of roast meat. He opened his mind on the subject to his master, who enjoying a fit of meditation at the moment could scarcely become sensible of his poor follower's grievance. When fully aware of the uncomfortable condition of his humble brother, he began to be in trouble, but in a moment or two his countenance brightened up, and he addressed him a few words of comfort, promising on the part of Providence that relief was at hand.

Guairé's company, as already said, were on the point of taking their seats, and the four young comrades devouring with eyes and nose the tempting dish of venison, when on a moment that same dish taking the lead, and the others following suite, arose from the board, and noiselessly cleaving the air, passed out at the door, and slowly, and in an even line, the deer's meat still leading the way, directed their flight southwards in the direction of the cell of the sainted Mochua. After a moment of amaze, loud exclamations of anger and lament arose, and out rushed the noble company in pursuit, the four culpable hunters leading the way. There was no need of hurry; the dishes held on their steady way some ten feet from the ground, and merely required the pursuers to keep up a brisk pace, not to let them out of sight. On went the race, enlivened and diversified by groans, objurgations, and now and then bursts of merriment, at least such merriment as hungry men could afford to exhibit. Coming near the cell of the saint which

was cut out of a rock with a smiling plot of green turf before it, the dish in the van sailed lightly into the grotto, and the others disposed themselves in a circle on the dry grass outside.

At five perches from the grotto the four young chiefs, pressing forwards with the rest, found their feet firmly locked to the ground, and there, with feelings of shame, anger, and remorse, they were obliged to remain while their companions advanced, and received on bended knees the blessing of the saint. Arising and receiving his exhortation to take their food, they sat down, and with the aid of the pure spring water from the rock, they made as hearty a meal as if they were round the large hall table at Durlus. But the condition of the four youths soon attracted their attention, and there arose from the different groups some bursts of laughter, mingled with various expressions of concern.

The king and the saint approached them, and the latter exhorted them to acknowledge the hidden sin for which they were now suffering. The youth who had slain the deer, immediately acknowledged his fault, and willingly took the entire blame to himself. Mochua having satisfied himself that the sorrow was sincere, gave the men his blessing, and they found their limbs at liberty. They got enough to satisfy their hunger in one of the dishes, but at that Easter dinner, did not enjoy the taste of the smallest bit of the coveted venison. The poor clerk got a considerable fright when he first saw the crowd approach in pursuit of the runaway food, so he took his meal in moderation.

That Easter feast was long remembered at Durlus Guairé, and to modern times the route taken by the viands bore the name of *Bothar na Mias* (Way of the Dishes).



THE CHASTISEMENT OF THE BARDS.

PLEASANT images to the souls of the youthful and the poetic are the assemblages of knights and ladies in the great hall of chief or king in former days ; the filea, or chief poet, repeating some heart-stirring lay in whose subject, and language,

and delivery, all are wrapt—the harpers uniting the melodies of their instruments with the melody of the bard's voice at intervals, the applause given at the end by the noble audience, and the cups of gold, the collars, the mantles, the brooches, and the other rich gifts conferred on the minstrels at the close by the generous monarch or chief. It was all very brilliant, very sentimental, and very exciting no doubt, but the finest tapestry has its reverse.

Before King Diarmuidh limited the number of poets to the proportion of one to each chief, Ireland was a mere pasture-ground for the great herd of wandering minstrels that went from lios to caisiol, reciting their heroic lays and stories, and carrying away from the unfortunate owners such commodities as those mentioned above—even cattle being acceptable when the gold and silver goblets, and rich brooches, and ring-money came short.

A simple reader may ask why did kings and chiefs submit to such extortion and tyranny at the hands of these learned and grasping sons of song? But he would not propound the query if he were aware of the power of satire over the sensitive minds of the ancient Irish gentry—an influence to which they submitted down to the end of the last century: A chief or petty prince of old days would consider himself unworthy to rule his tribe in peace, or lead them to battle, if he were certain that the man of three hundred and fifty stories, or even of a single fifty, had satirised his poverty or stinginess at the fort of a neighbouring lord.

In later days the place of the extinct line of bards was filled by decayed folk who had once been gentlemen, or were sons of decayed gentlemen, and through pride and laziness preferred to pass from one castle to another, and live at free quarters, rather than enter into business, or harden their soft palms with vulgar tools. They were generally furnished with bitter tongues, and few of their unwilling entertainers dared to hint at their room being desirable, lest the genteel "Shuler" might entertain his next hosts at their expense. If he was more or less gifted with a power of stringing rhymes, his clients were all the more to be pitied.

The withering satire of an eminent bard made its power be felt even on the brute creation, and fame in this respect reached as far as Britain : witness Ben Jonson and Randolph, the author of the "Jealous Lovers" :—

" Rhyme them to death as they do Irish rats
In drumming tunes." * *

* * * *

" And my poet
Shall, with a satire steeped in vinegar,
Rhyme them to death as they do rats in Ireland."

It was not without considerable sinking of heart that Guairé received a message announcing the impending visit of Seanchan, chief bard of Erin, with the widow of the last chief bard, the hard-to-be-pleased Muirrean, together with thrice fifty professors, thrice fifty students, thrice fifty hounds, thrice fifty male attendants, thrice fifty female relatives, and some miscellaneous followers.

Guairé possessed some moral courage, united to a high degree of the physical quality. He met the mighty mass of visitors, kissed their chiefs, and welcomed the entire body in these terms—" My regards to you all ; my regards to your nobles and ignobles ; I have great welcome for you all, both professors and poets, both scientific men and students, both men and women, both hounds and servants. Only you are so numerous (but not deeming you too many), I would give each of you a separate welcome. However, my respects to you all on every side."—Vide *Ossianic Transactions*, vol. 5.

The widow of the late lamented bard, his illustrious successor, and their long array, were entertained royally in a newly-raised little town of wooden houses ; but every night the colony was disturbed by some one of the women being seized with an irresistible wish for some strange commodity such as would seem unprocurable in the kingdom. The whole community would be kept awake the remainder of the night listening to the lamentation of the lady seized on by the wishes, and devising ways and means to satisfy her. On the next morning after the arrival, Guairé presenting himself and expressing his hopes that all had passed a comfortable night, his ears were dinned on both sides by

the reports of want of sleep, and other inconveniences suffered by the bards, and their students, and the assistants, and the women from the complaints of Muirrean, because she had not a cup of beer extracted from the herb *tormentil*, the marrow of the ankle-bone of the wild hog, a pet cuckoo in an ivy bush, a gown of spiders' web girdled by a belt of the yellow lard of a white hog, and herself in possession of these rare articles, mounted on a steed with brown mane and white feet, and humming a tune on the way to Durlus.

The thin-skinned Guairé, on hearing these modest wishes, was at his wit's end, knowing that he was expected to fulfil every whim of his troublesome guests while they incumbered his court. He retired, and after some hours' study, finding himself a thousand miles from the accomplishment of the most modest of the desires—knowing his inability to outlive a lampoon, and unwilling to commit suicide, he resolved on the only feasible course in his power. He started off for the fort of Fulachtach, son of Owen, with whom he was at deadly feud, nothing being easier than to let himself be slain in the consequent fight. However, he was turned from his purpose by his half-brother Marvan, who, though a saint, desired no more respectable occupation than herding his brother's swine. Having learned Guairé's grievance, he promised to procure all the articles demanded, including the yellow lard of his own white boar. He was as wrathful as a saint could well be, at being obliged to kill his faithful and useful animal, and the words he said are set forth in Irish and English in *The Ossianic Transactions*, vol. 5 :—

“ ‘ May what she wishes for be of little service ! Sure it is I who have that boar, and it is a hardship to me to kill him, for he is to me a herdsman, a musician, a physician, a messenger.’ ‘ How does he perform all that for you ?’ asked Guairé. ‘ In the following manner,’ replied Marvan : ‘ when I return from the swine at night, and the skin is torn off my feet by the briars of Gleann-a-Scail (Glen of the Shadow), he comes to me and rubs his tongue all over my feet, and though I should have all the surgeons and healing ointments in the world, his tongue would cure me soonest ; in that manner he is a physician to me. He is a herd to

me; for when the swine wander through Gleann-a-Scail, and that I am wearied, I touch him with my foot, and he goes after the swine. There are nine passes leading into Gleann-a-Scail, and there is no danger of any hog of them being carried off by a thief, vagrant, or wolf of the forest, until he drives in the very last hog of them. He is a musician to me; for when I am anxious to sleep I touch him with my foot, and he lies on his back, and sings me a *cronan* (humming tune), and his music is more grateful to me than that of a sweet-toned harp in the hands of an accomplished minstrel. The blackbird is the most variable in his notes of all birds, yet the boar is still more varied. It is hard for me to kill that animal,' said Marvan, 'and do thou send messengers for him, for I cannot kill him; and I pledge my word to you that I will pay a visit some day to the mansion of the great bardic body, to be avenged on them for the white boar, and may they never be the better for it!'"

And, indeed, either through the saint's implied wish, or the natural working of evil, Muirrean having obtained all the objects wished for, and being pleasantly employed jogging away on the brown-maned and white-footed horse, with her cuckoo on its ivy bush, and the belt of yellow lard encircling her spider-webbed gown, fell from her steed, and met her death from a fracture of the neck and a few of the ribs.

As if Guairé was not sufficiently annoyed by gratifying such whims as these, Seanchan indulged in a sulky fit and would take no food, but satirised the attendants that presented it. Finally, when he condescended to taste something, an egg was brought; but, alas! while it had been left by the servant unwatched, before bringing it to table, a mouse had gnawed a hole in the shell and sucked most of its contents. Then it was that Seanchan's wrathful satire scathed the palace mice so severely that a dozen crept out of their holes into his presence, held up their miserable paws, and died!

Still not appeased, he turned his great ire against the cats for allowing the vermin to be in existence, and he satirised the whole feline tribe, including their king Irusan, son of Arusan, who held court in the far-off cavern of Knowth, on the Boyne. He felt the effect, but it only in-

fused fury into his royal soul. Communicating his revengeful intent to his Queen, "Sharp Tooth," daughter of Queen "Fiery Mouth," to the Princess "Sharp Tooth," and the young Princes, the "Purrer," and the "Surly Fellow," he flew westward, leaving directions for his sons to follow; and with glaring eyes, bare teeth and claws, and like a bullock in size, he dashed in on Seanchan, though surrounded by all the nobility of Conacht. Taking him by one arm, he flung him on his back, and returning eastwards, he crossed the Shannon, and was cantering leisurely through the village of Clonmacnois, when he was espied by good St. Kieran, then occupied in his forge as a grimy blacksmith. Shifting the cool end of the fiery bar into his right hand, he made such a judicious and strong cast of the flame-darting weapon that, entering the animal's body just behind where Seanchan's inert weight lay and depended, it passed through, and slew the enraged beast, and rescued the ill-tempered bard from a terrible death.

When the cup of the bardic arrogance and importunity of the assembly was at last full, the justly resentful saint came to the wooden building of the worthless sons of song; like a *sighe gaoithe* the doors flew open before him, and his presence carried terror into their hearts. Endeavouring to assume a false courage for the moment, they contended with him in recondite questions and musical skill, but were totally defeated, and obliged to submit to the terrible geasa he inflicted on them—to wit, that they should be deprived of the poetic power, and never sleep two nights in the same place till they obtained the full recital of the "Tain bo Cuailgne," which the professor, the only one who knew it, had carried away with him to Italy, written on squared staves in choice oghuim.

With sorrowing hearts they broke up their encampment, and leaving the women and the valets under the protection of Guairé, the professors repaired to the palace of Naas, where the king of North Leinster resided. For him they composed the one poem allowed them by St. Marvan, and being furnished with a ship they sailed to Alba. There they wandered through its length and breadth, and no bard or scealuidhe could they find who remembered the "Tain."

They returned to Erin in wretched plight, and presented themselves before Marvan, who, now pitying their misery, acquainted them that no living bard within Britain, Alba, or Erin, knew the old heroic lay, and that their only chance was to have the shade of Fergus, son of Roigh, summoned from his resting-place. He was a principal actor in the Great Cattle Spoil, and, moreover, a bard of high rank. So the twelve apostles (bishops) of Ireland were assembled, and St. Colum Cille summoned from the Hebrides, and they sat round the cromlech of the buried chief for three days, conjuring his spirit to appear and release the unfortunate bards. At last the tomb opened, and the long-dead chief arose, awful in arms as he once appeared to Conor's warriors. While the company remained sunk in solemn silence, he commenced and repeated the long epic of the "Tain bo Cuailgne," while St. Kieran made a careful copy, and at its conclusion the mighty shade vanished from all eyes. The bards were released from their geasa, and their after demeanour exhibited a fair leaven of modesty.

By "The Twelve Apostles of Ireland" are meant the following bishops, who held jurisdiction in the country during portions of the sixth century. These were: St. Brendan of Birr, who expired 29th November, 571; St. Brendan of Ardfert, Co. Kerry (see above), and of Clonfert, Co. Galway (A.D. 484-597); St. Caineach, patron of Aghaboe, Queen's Co. (A.D. 515-599); St. Ciaran of Clonmacnois, who died A.D. 549; St. Colum Cille of Kells and Iona, A.D. 519-596; St. Colum Mac Crimthain of Terryglas, Co. Tipperary, who died A.D. 552; St. Comgall of Bangor, Co. Down, who died 10th May, 601; St. Finnen of Clonard, in Meath, who died A.D. 552; St. Finnen of Moville, Co. Down, who died A.D. 576; St. Mobhi, patron of Glasnaidhen (Glasnevin), who died 12th October, 545; St. Molaisi of Nadfraech, brother to Aongus, first Christian King of Munster, who died about A.D. 570; St. Nennius, patron of Inismacsaint, Co. Fermanagh (was living A.D. 530); St. Ruaan, patron of Lothra, Co. Tipperary, whose death occurred on 15th April, 584. The death of St. Canice of Kilkenny occurred A.D. 598; and that of St. Kevin in 617, at the age of 120 years.



THE DESERTION OF TARA.

AFTER the palace and hill of Teamur or Tara had been distinguished by the residence of all the chief monarchs

from the days of the Danaans to the middle of the sixth century, it was finally abandoned by Diarmuidh Mac Fergus, the reigning Ard-Righ ; and since then no royal entertainment has been given, nor royal feis held in "Tara's halls." This is the cause assigned in the annals of Clonmacnois :

Diarmuidh was a prince of large ideas in matters of hospitality and display, and in order that there should be some analogy between the liberal style in which his house-keeping was maintained at Tara, and that shown by the princes and chiefs of his realm, he conceived the idea of sending one of his runners through the length and breadth of the land to carry his designs into effect. His envoy bore a spear of the ordinary dimensions, and when he came to dun or lios, into the door of which he could not enter with the weapon set athwart his breast, he would not enter till the inmates had broken down as much of the sides as would afford free passage to his weapon so held. After disturbing a reasonable number of households in his progress, he arrived at a dun in Hy Mainé in Conacht in the chief's absence. The opening not being sufficient, the hospitable family had the sides broken down, and entertained the king's representative in good style. The chief on his return was troubled at the ruinous appearance of his entrance, and hearing the cause from the stupid or malicious servant who first met him, he took it for a personal affront, and being a man of hot temper, he hastened into his hall and without waiting for explanation or parley, he thrust his spear through the body of his guest and the envoy of his sovereign.

The rash deed being done, and explanations heard, and his passion cooled, he was seized by violent remorse. Fear of his sovereign's resentment being added, he quitted his dun and repaired to his brother St. Ruaan, who governed the monastery of Lothra in Ormond. He, for better security, sent him to the court of Wales, and there he remained oppressed with the deepest melancholy. Diarmuidh hearing of the place of his retreat, despatched an ambassador to his brother of Wales, inviting him to drive the fugitive from his court, or be prepared for the dire,

effect of a refusal. The unhappy man not willing to cause further bloodshed, returned to Lothra, and there Diarmuidh, attended by a small retinue, came after some time to secure him. He paid but scant courtesy to the holy abbot, and when the refugee could not be found, he set his followers at work to tear up the floor of the chapter-room where St. Ruaan received him. One of the searchers when ripping up the flooring found his limbs paralyzed, but that did not stay the efforts of the party.

At last the unfortunate man was discovered in a recess beneath the floor, and carried away, the king declaring in his anger that abbot or monk should no more be heard of or seen at Lothra, and that its walls should be levelled from top to bottom.

Next day when the king was at a feast with his nobles, there entered the palace St. Ruaan and his monks, and coming to the king's presence, he demanded that his brother should be given up to him on payment of an eric of thirty horses for the slain man. Diarmuidh indignantly refused, and then the abbot and his religious went forth, and when twilight fell, a hundred and fifty monks made the circuit of the royal fortress, loudly chanting psalms by the light of torches, and the abbot in his robes followed, and uttered solemn denunciations against Teamur and its possessors, and rung his antique bell, and prophesied that from that time, king nor chief should rule in its halls. As the inhabitants of the royal fort looked down and beheld the long procession lit up by the torches, and heard the loud intoning of the psalms, and the denunciations of the saint, and the terrible tones that came from the bell, awe and terror seized on their souls, and if the king had not quitted the place very few days after, he would have been left there without man-at-arms, without councillor, without wife, without child. (He was now very ready to give up his prisoner at the eric offered.) And from that time the deserted courts gradually changed appearance till a huge green mound is all that recalls the memory of the once royal "Tara of the kings."

HOW BRANDUBH SAVED LEINSTER.

THERE is a piece of romantic history connected with the once important town of Baltinglass, which, though our present collection does not aim at topographical or strict historical information, must be allowed a place in it.

Caomusca, son of Aedh (Hugh) Mac Ainmire, King of Ireland, was a prince who had his passions under no restraint. He quitted his paternal stone Caisiol at Aileach to make a circuit of Ireland, halting at the earthen or stone fortresses of chiefs and princes, and treating their wives as his handmaids. We are not told whether he commenced his system till he arrived, attended by four battalions of rough men-at-arms, at the court of Brandubh (*Black Raven*), King of Leinster, who held his provincial court at Baltinglass. The master being absent for the moment, the queen gave a hospitable reception to the worthless prince. She was sufficiently indignant when he hinted his wishes to her, but dissembling her feelings, she requested a little leisure to look after the accommodation of his retinue. Not suspecting any serious objection on her part, he readily gave permission, of which she so well availed herself, that she effected her escape to her husband at Dun Buicht. He, returning with his heart full of resentment, set fire to the separate house in which the royal reprobate was lodged. He and his myrmidons rushed out and several were slain. However, he escaped eastwards to Kilranelagh, but the wrathful king kept on his traces, and coming up with him at that hill, slew him and the few who had held along with him.

Great was the wrath of Hugh at hearing the death of his son. Collecting a large force he set out, and made no halt till he entered the territory of Brandubh. He being unable with his inferior number of fighting men to offer battle, fortified himself in Rathbran, and sent his foster-brother, St. Aidan, to treat of terms with the wrathful invader. If Eric would not be accepted he asked for an armistice till he could collect his forces—a request frequently complied with in the romantic annals of the country.

But the fierce king would neither accept an eric, nor grant a truce ; he even insulted the holy man who had come to treat with him. So the Leinster king sent messengers in all directions to summon his petty chiefs to come to his aid, and at their head he had the good fortune to capture a body of allies, on their march to join Airmire. He next approached with a few trusty followers as near the royal camp as prudence allowed, with the object of learning his enemy's arrangements. The thing which chiefly caught his attention, at least that which the poet historians thought most striking and picturesque, was the appearance of the banners of the O'Neills and O'Donnells, and other northern tribes, floating and fluttering here and there at the tops of the tall spears, and having the appearance of birds of various colours hovering over the encampment.

A spy sent into Hugh's camp admirably seconded the designs of Brandubh. He stained his skin to resemble that of a leper, and came in limping before the king, complaining of Brandubh's people, who had burned his cabin, and little chapel, and his farming implements. He also told him in confidence that the inhabitants of the surrounding country, feeling the badness of their king's cause, and wishing to propitiate his (Airmire's) good disposition towards them, were employed collecting provisions, which they would privately send into his camp the next night but one, by a certain pass.

All this was very pleasant to the Ard-Righ. He promised the leper ample recompense for the loss he had sustained, and waited impatiently next day for the fall of night. In order to guard against treachery, he stationed a strong body of armed men at the pass, who would give the alarm and prevent the approach of the visitors if anything of a suspicious character was noticed.

After darkness had come down on the glens, the guards stationed in the defile heard the trampling of a long column of men and beasts approaching from the open country. They prepared to receive the advancing party with their sharp weapons, but nothing more threatening met their eyes than quiet oxen and restless horses, each led by an unarmed man, and bearing large hampers or skins on each side

apparently filled with liquor. The skins on some of the foremost of the beasts were taken down, and left with the guards to refresh them, while the rest of the long file proceeded in the direction of the camp. Swift runners had sped before them, so the king and his people were ready to give them a welcome reception. As they approached the camp a considerable appearance of restlessness became evident among the animals, and the dull sounds of trampling hoofs, and the grating and clashing of hard bodies against each other came to the ears of its occupiers. All at once a great light was shed on the scene from the summit of a small eminence outside the camp; a troop of horses maddened by bags of small stones fastened to their tails were rushing madly through the crowds disposed at the edge of the camp to receive the provisions, and a countless number of fully armed warriors just released from the skins and hampers, and aided by the conductors of the animals, were rushing on the unsuspecting occupiers of the camp, with swords and spears, and wildly yelling their peculiar war cries. All that resisted were slaughtered, and not for some time could quarter be obtained. The spy, a son of the chief of Imail, having provided himself with arms, encountered and slew King Hugh, and after the fight was over, presented his head to Brandubh.

Thus was the Province of Leinster saved from the fury of an enraged king and the insolence of his troops by the wisdom and courage of its prince. The invasion and the capture of the camp took place A.D. 594. The place afterwards bore the name of Dunbolg (Fort of the Bags) from the articles used in the attack, and at present bears the name of Dunboyke. Excursionists will find it in the neighbourhood of Hollywood. Such of our readers as we have interested in the district of the *Duffrey* will not be well pleased to hear that the warden of *Senboith* (old huts, now Templeshanbo) slew the gallant Brandubh in an insurrection, A.D. 601.

The derivation of the name "Baltinglass" is thus given by the late Mr. O'Curry. *Cu Glas* (Gray Dog), son of Donn Desa, King of Leinster, and master of the hounds to Conairé Mor, King of Ireland, (say

50 A.C.) once followed the chase to the hill which rises near the little town. There hunter and hounds disappeared in a cavern, and nothing more was heard of them. The cave ever after bore the name,—*Uaiv Belaich Conglais*,—"The cavern of the road of Cu Glas." *Baltin* so closely resembling *Bealtinè*, "Beal's Fire," led to the belief that the little town got its name from the pagan festival in honour of the sun, celebrated on May eve. This is probably the true origin of the name.



THE FIGHT AT MOYRA.

DONALL, son of that Hugh who was slain at Dunbolg, and sixth in descent from "Niall of the Hostages," obtained the crown of Ireland, A.D. 635, about forty years after the death of his father, the last intruder, Suivné Maen, having been killed by Conall Claen of oblique vision, with whom we shall presently make acquaintance. Tara being interdicted as a royal residence, Donall made for himself a strong fort on the south side of the Boyne (near Dowth), and named it Dun na-n-Gaedh (Fort of the Darts). One night he dreamed that his favourite hound Feargloun sprung from his knee in rage and fury, gathered a crowd of fierce dogs from Erin, Britain (Wales), Saxonland, and Alba, and held battle and conflict with himself and his forces for seven days, and then he and the chief dogs of his army perished. This dream disturbed him, and his sage brother who had laid by an earthly crown to devote himself to a religious life, did not afford him much comfort by his explanation. "You entertain in your court two foster sons, viz. Cothach Caev, King of Conacht, and Congal Claen, King of Ulster. One of these will act as the dog in your dream. But my advice is this, invite all the great of Erin to a feast, take hostages of every king and chief, and keep under watch and ward your two foster-sons for a year; then dismiss them with valuable presents. The venom of every dream is powerless if it is not fulfilled within the twelvemonth." "If all the men of Erin were to rise against me," said Donall, "Congal would not. I shall give the entertainment, but put no one under restraint."

So the feast was announced, and the stewards, and the

rent-collectors, and the law-givers (!) were directed to gather in all kinds of choice food and choice drinks—wine, mead, and ale ; and as goose eggs were scarce at the time, to make as good a provision of them as could be done. Some collectors passing near a little hermitage on the Boyne, saw a flock of geese outside, and entering, they found a basket full of their eggs. “Good fortune is in our way,” said they. “These will be a great furthering to the feast ;” but they were answered by a woman with a black hood on her head, whom they found within praying. “It is bad fortune they will bring with them,” said she. “The holy Bishop Erc of Slane spends the day in the Boyne with the water up to his armpits, while he reads his offices from his breviary on the bank. All his daily food is only an egg and a half, and three sprigs of water cress. If you deprive the saint of that small nourishment, bad luck will attend you and your employers.” But they were plebeians, and carried off the basket.

When the holy patron of Slane came home in the evening, the woman told him what had occurred, and he said ; “It will not be good luck to the person to whom this kind of food is brought, and the peace and welfare of Erin will not result from the banquet to which it is added, but quarrels, contentions, and commotions, will be the consequence to her,”—and so it proved.

Before the feast commenced, a man and woman, fearful to behold, entered the hall of feasting, bearing a basket of eggs between them. “We come,” said they, “with our offering for the royal meal, and are therefore worthy of being entertained.” They placed before them food sufficient for a hundred people, and this the man ate up without sharing a mouthful with the woman. They then laid down food for a hundred again, and the woman consumed it without help from the man. Then was a third quantity equally great placed before them, and after eating it they asked for more. “By my hand,” said the steward, “you get no more here,” and they answered in anger : “Evil attends the feast of which we first partake : we belong to *Infernus*,” and they vanished.

Before the company entered the hall, the king sent his

foster son, Congal, to look at the order and the quantity, and to give him his opinion. The prince was delighted with everything he saw; and the arrangement and the sight of the eggs so pleased him that he ate a portion of one, and returned to his foster father, and gave him much pleasure with his praise of the food and the mode in which everything was arranged. But just then word was brought to Donall, how the hermitage was robbed, and what the holy bishop had said. "If no one has brokon or tasted an egg," said he, "ill-luck may be kept at a distance." But Congal mentioned what he had done, and his grieved foster father sent for the "Twelve Apostles of Erinn" to bless the feast and avert the impending curse. The apostles did come and bless the feast, and it would have been blessed had none of the eggs been broken. But it was not so, and the curse opened its black wings over the table.

The seats were soon filled, and kings and chiefs ate, and drank, and were merry, and then a goose egg on a silver dish was laid before every guest; but when Congal Claen touched his, lo! it became the small egg of a red-feathered hen, and it was on a wooden trencher it rested. He would not have taken offence but for the outcry made by his tried follower, Gair Gann Mac Sthugawn, against the supposed affront. Roused to anger, he was rushing to where the king sat, to make his complaint, but being stopped by the steward, he ran him through with his sword.

This Congal, in order to clear the way to the throne for his foster father, had assaulted the late King Suivné Maen while playing chess before his stone fortress at Aileach (see before), and transfixed him with his javelin. Suivné, though wounded to death, flung a chess man at his murderer, and knocked out one of his eyes. For this deed Donall replaced him in his government of Ulster, but kept back a district or two. Congal, while standing before the Ard-Righ, in fierce resentment enumerated his services and his losses, and quitted the assembly in wrath. The king was urged to punish him for the outrageous insult, but he only listened to his indulgent feelings towards his foster son. He sent the apostles after him, he sent the poets after him; but he would not hear of a reconciliation from these or

those. He collected forces in Alba, Britain, and Saxonland, and at Magh Rath (Moyra), in Down, he fought against his foster father's forces for seven days, slaying many a strong and skilful swordsman, till he met destruction from the hand of the loyal and unselfish Ceallach. In the volume of the Irish Archæological Society (1842), entitled "The Banquet of Dun na n-Gedh (Fort of Goose-eggs), and The Battle of Magh Rath," is given a long succession of single fights and other incidents, for two only of which can room be afforded. One is the madness of Suivné, son of Ciar, who being seized on by mortal terror in the midst of the slaughter, escaped by mighty bounds from the battle field, and after much wandering, came to *Teagh Moling* (St. Moling's house), in the southern angle of the county of Carlow, and was there slain by a herdsman.

The second very remarkable incident thus occurred :— A warrior named Ceannfaelad possessed a brain, a portion of which being injured in some way, he was not able to retain anything in his memory. An ill-intended but most lucky stroke of a sword breaking his skull, out gushed the diseased portion of brain, the warrior's intellect was fully restored, and the mere fracture was put to rights at St. Bricinn's house in Tuam Dreacain. There he daily attended a school of classics, a school of law, and a school of philosophy, and such were the recovered powers of his memory, that he made a poetic resumé every night of what he had heard in the day, and committed it to vellum.

Historic belief is requested for the fact of Congal's taking offence, for his procuring foreign aid, for his exhibiting rare prudence, patience, and ability in effecting that object, and for his well-merited defeat and destruction. The nameless author of the little epic has not quoted his authorities for the marvellous incidents in the narrative ; so everyone must consult his own judgment as to belief or disbelief in their occurrence.



THE DEATH OF THE WICKED THORGILS.

TOWARDS the end of the ninth century this Danish potentate had obtained much power in the country, his head-

quarters being in Dublin. For the sake of having the nominal king, Maolseachluin (St. Seachnal's follower) or Malachi, better under his control, he built himself a strong stone fort near the native royal residence in Meath. He invited himself occasionally to partake the hospitality of the native king, and on the last of these occasions the sensual old Dane, somewhat exalted in liquor, was so struck with the appearance of the young princess, that he proposed in a confident and friendly tone to her father to make her his chief mistress. The unfortunate monarch, if he had followed his first impulse, would have made the point of his leaf-shaped sword acquainted with the heart's blood of the half-drunk tyrant; but prudence and a project which at the moment entered his head, kept his hand quiet. "Your offer," said he, "does our family honour; but as the thing, if done with the knowledge of our neighbours, would ever prevent my daughter from getting a husband, either prince or chief, you will allow me to send her with her fifteen lady-attendants to your castle under cover of the next moonless night, and be sure to let all return before the day begins to dawn." "That I will, and bring in the meanwhile fifteen of my most valued chiefs to entertain the beauteous damsels, for beauteous they surely are."

That night at a later hour did Malachi hold serious counsel with his daughter and her betrothed, one of his most trusted young flaiths.

Fifteen Danish chiefs from Dublin were in Thorgill's castle on the appointed night, and a banquet awaited the arrival of the princess and her ladies when darkness would be set in. At last the watchers heard the sound of feet, they opened the strong door, and sixteen ladies, waited on by six strong retainers, filed in. Leave had been given for the admission of this body-guard, whose duty it would be to conduct their charge in safety home again. These men staid with the sentinels, who had been directed to give them good entertainment.

Very cordially were the visitors received by the host and his chiefs, and much time was not lost till all were engaged on the viands. The Northmen, as was their wont, drank freely, but the ladies had to be pressed to take even a

moderate quantity. Everything earthly must have an end. The king mentioned to the chief attendant that he and his assistants would be no longer needed, and when they retired he called for silence till he would give a toast. He began it, but it was never concluded, for as each Dane seized on his goblet, every youth drew from under the female garb that covered his breast a sharp, well-tempered skian, and the next moment it was stuck to the haft in the breast of his neighbour, and the bodies of fifteen dead or dying strong men were encumbering the ground.

Up sprung Thorgils, and round him in a ring gathered the fierce young men. Nothing daunted, though incumbered with drink and years, he would have engaged them all, but the princess's betrothed bade them hold their hands. To him the unprincipled old reprobate had offered an insult not to be forgiven, and by his hand he should be punished. They engaged, and the fiery youth soon felt that he had to do with a master in the strife of arms. Space was cleared for the struggle, and pitiable was the state of the princess as she beheld her knight, though displaying more skill and strength than could be expected, every moment in danger of receiving a deadly wound. With eyes distended, lips apart, and hands clenched, she surveyed every turn of the fight till, as the struggle approached the table, she uttered a wild scream, for the hand of one of the dying men made a grasp at the foot of the young chief. The rapid movements of the combatants, however, disappointed the expectations of the Dane. It was the foot of Thorgils that was seized, and down came the colossal frame, and lay helpless on the flag. "Kill him not," said his adversary. "Bind him hand and foot. He shall taste the bitterness of death tenfold when under the gaze of the thousands whose lives he and his relentless subordinates have rendered wretched."

The noise had brought some of the attendants to the door, and these seeing the floor encumbered with the dead bodies of the chiefs, the fierce looking ladies each grasping a bright sword, and the extremity to which the king was brought, shouted for succour. On rushed to the rescue members of the garrison, but ere they reached the scene of strife, they had to turn to defend their own lives. Shouts

and the rushing tramp of assaulters admitted by the six men were heard at the entrance of the fortress, and a desperate but short conflict ensued between the inmates and the overpowering force led by King Malachi. Quarter was neither expected nor asked, and not a Scandinavian, Thorgils excepted, was alive at sunrise.

The princess's betrothed took little part in the conflict. He had no fear for the issue of the fray, and his full care was needed by the state into which mortal terror for his life had thrown her.

Like wild-fire the glorious news sped through Erinn on the ensuing day, inspiring the natives with joy and courage, and the cruel intruders with dismay. Everywhere the natives rose, defeats and slaughters succeeded, and for a time the foreign influence was crushed. Thorgils, after experiencing the most acute mortification from exposure to the regards of the people to whom he had dealt nothing but cruelty and injustice, was flung into the depths of Loch Annin. The princess and her brave young hero were made happy, and for a season their country enjoyed the blessings arising from peace and good government.



THE FORTUNES OF QUEEN GORMFLAITH.

THE learned Cormac of Cashel (end of ninth century) was affianced to the beautiful and accomplished Gormflaith (pr. *Gormlay*, blue eyed Lady) daughter of Flann Siona, King of Ireland. However, the betrothed prince feeling an imperative call to a sacerdotal life, resigned the union, entered into holy orders, and became in time Bishop as well as King of Cashel. Neither father nor daughter felt complimented by this proceeding, and in some time the rejected princess unwillingly married Cearval, King of Leinster, at her father's command. This prince, who was more or less brutal and selfish, could not bear comparison with the noble-minded and learned prince of Cashel, who would willingly enough have been her husband but for the higher call. It is a pity that he had not known his mind sooner.

In the year 903, Flann incited by his son-in-law asserted

his right to the presentation of the ancient church of *Mainisther Eibhin* (Monastery of Evin, a disciple of St. Patrick), now Monasterevan. Cormac resisted his claim, and the united forces of Flann and Cearval encountered his at *Bealach Mughna* (Woody or Marshy Pass, Ballymoon), in the extreme southern angle of the county of Kildare. In the fight the bishop-king was flung from his horse, slain, and beheaded, and his forces routed. Cearval being badly wounded, was borne to his royal residence at Naas, where he was affectionately attended by his wife.

One day, during his convalescence, he began with much animation to relate to a large company the circumstances of the late fight. He described with so much complacency and want of feeling the death and dismemberment of the hapless Cormac, that the tender-souled queen gently expostulated with him. This little check so irritated him that he flung the poor lady on the ground, disordering her dress in the brutal assault, and thus disgracing her, as far as in him lay, in the eyes of her dependents.

She at once quitted his house, and repaired to her father, who was restrained from punishing the dastardly outrage by the presence of a powerful Danish force in Dublin; he even induced her to return to Naas. But the news had reached the ears of her cousin, Prince Niall Glundubh (Black Knee), son of the king of Ulster, who collecting the northern clans marched to the borders of Cearval's territory, and threatened it with all the horrors of fire and sword, if ample amends were not made for the queen's wrongs, and herself left at full liberty to live where she pleased. At her own intercession he staid his hand, she only claiming her dowry, liberty to live in her father's palace, and release from all conjugal ties.

These demands being complied with, she returned to her paternal home in Meath, with very grateful feelings towards her chivalrous relative. He, however, was not content with these sentiments, however warm. He was a genuine Celt, and nothing less than a wife's love would satisfy him. Cearval's savage conduct had, in his eyes, thoroughly loosed the marriage tie, and his loved and loving partner she should be. However, neither the Gospel nor the Canon Law

would allow of her being the wife of two living husbands. She remained at home, and he was obliged to lay in a stock of such patience as was to be procured.

Next year, however, Cearval being slain in a fight with the Danes of Dublin, all impediments were removed, and she became the happy consort of Niall, one of the bravest and most patriotic princes that ever wielded sword. In 914 he succeeded to his father-in-law as Ard-Righ, and, before and after, never ceased battling with the Danes, and doing everything which wisdom and valour could effect for the weal of his people. He and his brave father, Hugh Finnliath, were the only northern princes who, before the efforts of Brian Borumha, ever took effective steps to expel the foreigners from Munster.

The Danes, being dislodged from their various strongholds, concentrated their strength in Dublin, and thither marched the king with all his available strength, to try a decisive conflict with them. It appears that their forces outnumbered his, for they did not seek defence within walls or ships. A terrible and fatal battle was fought at a place anciently called Cill Mosomòg, (between Rathfarnham and Dundrum), and the native forces completely defeated; Niall and most of his chiefs, including his wife's eldest brother, Conor, being left dead on the field.

Donncha, Gormflaith's younger brother, succeeded, and reigned till the year 943. At his death the sceptre passed out of the hands of his family, and his widowed sister suffered privations during the remainder of her life. "During her last illness" (we quote Mr. O'Curry) "she wrote a long and curious poem on her own life and misfortunes. In it she described the death of her son, who was accidentally drowned in the county Galway during his fosterage, the subsequent death of her husband, an interesting account of her mode of living, a sketch of the more happy part of her life, a character of Niall, of Cearval, and of Cormac, a description of the place and mode of sepulture of Niall, and on the whole, a greater variety of references to habits, customs, and manners than I have found in any other piece of its kind. I have, besides this, other stray verses of hers, composed under a variety of impulses and circumstances."

The ailment of which she died was brought on in a singular manner. The circumstances are related in the *Annals of Clonmacnois*, of which we have only the translation, made in the year 1627, by Connla Mac Echagan of Lismoyne (the fort in the bog), in the county of Westmeath, for Turlogh Mac Coghlan, lord of Delvin, in the same county. The following extract presents a good specimen of the rendering of the original Gaelic.

“Gormphley, daughter of King Flann Mac Mayleseachlyn (monk of Saint Sechnal), and queen of Ireland, died of a tedious and grievous wound, which happened in this manner. She dreamed that she saw King Niall Glunduffe; whereupon she got up, and sat in her bed to behold him, whom he for anger would forsake, and leave the chamber; and as he was departing in that angry motion (as she thought) she gave a snatch after him, thinking to have taken him by the mantle to keep him with her, and fell upon the bedstick of her bed, that it pierced her breast, which received no cure till she died thereof.”

During her subsequent illness, which was a tedious one, she composed that poem mentioned by Mr. O'Curry. It is probable that her circumstances between the death of her brother, A.D. 943, and her own, five years later, were not so wretched as is generally supposed. Looking with poetic eyes back to her happy life with Niall, and contrasting it with her present lonely state, she probably exaggerated the discomforts of her present condition.

This narrative is given in the *Book of Leinster* and the *Annals of Clonmacnois*.

THE FIGHT IN DUNDALK BAY.

ABOUT A.D. 960, Donoch son of Flann Siona, being king of Ireland, and Ceallaghan king of Munster, Sitric the Danish king of Dublin decided on the death or captivity of the last named, he had brought such destruction on the foreigners of Waterford and Limerick, and other maritime cities. He

thus endeavoured to carry out his design. He sent an embassy to the Munster king, expressing his wish to enter into bonds of friendship and family alliance with him, offering him the hand of his virtuous and accomplished sister in marriage. The fame of the young lady's beauty and merits had already reached Cashel, and Ceallaghan not only accepted the offer with pleasure, but set out for Dublin to celebrate the nuptials as soon as he could make the necessary preparations.

When Sitric learned one evening that he was within a few miles of the city he gleefully entertained his own wife, an Irish lady, and his sister, with the plot he had laid, and the immediate capture of the chief foe of himself and his countrymen. He did not succeed in infusing his own bitter feelings into the breasts of the true women. One had seen the noble and chivalrous prince, and was his countrywoman, the other could not help feeling a lively interest in one who was in such peril on her account. They held a council, and next morning, Ceallaghan, as he was entering Kilmainham, learned the plot from Sitric's consort, who had proceeded thither in disguise, and with but a couple of attendants. Eagerly thanking his kind friend, he and his following began to retrace their steps, but were soon intercepted by an overpowering force who had stationed themselves in ambush. Many lives were lost on both sides, but in the end Ceallaghan and Donnchuan son of Ceneidigh (Kennedy, king elect of Munster and father of Brian), were seized, and sent for greater security to Armagh.

Kennedy hearing of the misfortunes of Ceallaghan and of his own son, immediately raised all the men possible, marched at the head of the land forces to Armagh, and despatched a small fleet round to the eastern coast. As the army approached Armagh, the captives were sent thence, and secured in the Danish fleet lying in the bay of Dundalk, and soon the Munster men had the chagrin of beholding their own small naval force engaging the foreigners at every disadvantage. The torture of helplessly looking on while their dear comrades were waging an unequal strife, can scarcely be conceived.

Failve Finn, the Irish admiral, attacked and boarded the

Danish ship where Ceallaghan and Donnchuan were bound to the masts, and where Sitric commanded. Boarding the vessel he cut down all that opposed his way, freed the captives, urged Ceallaghan to go and take command of his own ship, and fought on. Alas! he was in the end overpowered and hewed in pieces; but his place was taken by a comrade worthy of him. This was Fionngall, who, after making terrible slaughter and seeing that escape to his own vessel was out of the question, seized Sitric by the body and sprung with him over the bulwarks. A cry of horror arose from the Danes, but a still more terrible cry pierced the clouds, when two other captains, Segda and Conall, following the example gripped Torr and Magnus, Sitric's two brothers, and flung themselves into the water with them. The appalling sight and the loss of their commanders so unnerved the foreigners, that the day went against them, and the landsmen, who till now had been walking to and fro in feverish agitation, had soon the joy of embracing their brave brothers in arms.

The authorities we have consulted are silent on the subject of the ensuing marriage of Ceallaghan with the young Danish princess, but on our own authority as *Scealwighe* we decide on its having taken place, and with the happiest results.



THE LEINSTER COW-TRIBUTE.

As we are approaching the era of "Brian of the Tribute" (Emperor of the Scots, as he is styled in the Book of Armagh), it is requisite to mention the cause of the original imposition of that unfortunate burden, placed on the shoulders of the unoffending Leinster people, for the unaccountable wickedness of their king, Achy Aincheann, while Moran the Just was directing the councils of Thual the Acceptable (middle of the first century). That bad specimen of a Leinster prince, presenting himself at the court of Tara, so pleased the Ard-Righ and the Ard-Righ's youngest daughter, the fair Dairinne, that a marriage was concluded, and a few weeks later the young pair proceeded

to Achy's royal dun at Naas. In time the fickle king, becoming tired of his spouse, or being persuaded that he would have done better by wedding the elder princess, Fithir, confined his queen in a remote part of his fortress, got a mock funeral performed, and after a respectable period of mourning, paid a second visit to Tara. Marriage with a deceased wife's sister not being prohibited in the old Brehon code, and Aincheann earnestly and affectionately suing for the society of the lovely Fithir, to console him in his bereavement, the second marriage was solemnized, and Fithir accompanied her husband to his home. Ah ! what was her dismay and terror, shortly after her instalment in her new grianan, when sitting beside her false lord, the door opened, and Dairinne (having somehow escaped) entered, all pale and sickly-looking, and everything about her betokening wretchedness ! Fithir was at the moment attacked by such conflicting and such bitter and painful feelings, that her vital powers forsook her, and she expired. Her unfortunate sister did not survive her many minutes.

The enraged monarch on hearing of the double tragedy, invaded the province with fire and sword ; and it was only on the assurance of receiving the triennial tribute set down below, that he consented to stay his hand. The enforcement of this demand caused many a bloody conflict down to the days of Brian. He exacted it on account of the aid continually afforded to the Danes by the Leinster king.

This *Boroimhe Laighean* consisted of bronze vessels, ounces of silver, cloaks, fat cows, fat wethers, and fat hogs—five thousand of each.



THE WAR-PATH TO CLONTARF.

THE patriotic and valiant Brian having quelled the power of the Danes, was minded to build war-galleys to be able to meet the Sea Kings on their own element. With this view he invited all the kings and chiefs of Erin to send him the noblest trees in their dominions to help on the good work. Maelmordha, king of Leinster, and brother-

in-law to Brian, eager to gratify his great relative, got cut down three of the finest oaks in Fidh Gaibhli (King's Co.), and intrusted their carriage westwards to three of his favourite tribes. At the ascent of a boggy pass, the bearers of the stout trunks not having room to advance side by side, began to dispute for precedence, and the Leinster king coming up at the moment, alighted from his horse and set his royal shoulder under the trunk, borne by the O'Faelans. In this spirited action the brooch which held his silken vest at the throat, a present from Brian, burst from its fastening, and could not be found. After their arrival at Kinkora, and their gracious reception by King Brian, Maelmordha spoke apart with his sister, Gormflaith, mentioned the accident, expressed his sorrow for having lost his brother-in-law's gift, and requested her to get it replaced by another from the same quarter. The lady, a haughty, unprincipled dame as ever existed, reproached her brother for his want of spirit, flatly refused the request, and relieved her outraged family importance by plucking the garment from his shoulders, and flinging it into the fire.

This incident gave an unpleasant turn to the current of thought and sentiment in the soul of the Leinster king, and his loyal feelings suffered a complete change by another incident close following on the family conference. Being engaged by-and-by looking on at a game of chess being played by the prince of Conacht and Conuing, one of Brian's nephews, he gave to the first-mentioned a hint which won the game for him. Conuing, bursting into a passion and looking sternly on him, exclaimed, "Ah, had you given the Danes such good advice at Gleann Mamra (near Dunlavin) they would not have fled before my father." "Perhaps," said the enraged Maelmordha, "I may yet give them such effective advice as may change the present state of rule in Erin." "Leinster loyalty all over!" retorted the prince, as the offended man withdrew.

On a little reflection he began to dread the probable effect of his disloyal speech, and becoming apprehensive for his personal safety, he quietly quitted the court and directed his steps eastwards. Brian on learning the above facts was much chagrined at the treatment received by a visitor in

his house, and despatched his swiftest messenger to overtake the king, apologise, and induce him to return to receive personal excuses, and have the matter amicably settled. The envoy came up with him on the eastern bank of the river, but before he could deliver his message in full, the resentful prince, forgetting princely manners, struck him violently on the head ; so the man returned to the palace covered with blood. The youthful portion of the court were for pursuing him, and administering chastisement for such unprovoked arrogance and insolence, but their counsels were overruled by the prudent king. "We are not free from blame," said he, "and the laws of hospitality must not be violated."

Maelmordha, on his return to Leinster, entered into a strict treaty with the Danes, both foreign and naturalised, and on Good Friday, A.D. 1014, the decisive and glorious battle of Clontarf was fought. The circumstances of this memorable fight are generally well known, so their omission here is of the less consequence.



THE LAST LORD OF CAPPA.

At the base of the Galties on a hillock of granite, are the remains of the Castle of William de Burgo. This domestic tragedy is connected with it.

William de Burgo and his lady occupied this castle of Cappa Uniac. One day, following the chase further than usual, he met with his brother Richard, who owned a still larger domain in the neighbourhood, and unthinkingly invited him to spend a week with him at Cappa. He recollected next moment that his wife bore a mortal hatred to this brother, and bitterly lamented his rashness.

On his return, he mentioned to his lady what he had done, and besought her to give Richard a kindly welcome ; but she became furious, and vowed that no part of Richard but his head should ever enter the castle, with her consent. He might then have sent letter or messenger to his brother with an apology, but he was of an undecided disposition.

He waited to the very day for some lucky thing to turn up, but he had the chagrin to see the gate closed and the draw-bridge raised by his wife's orders, as Richard and his attendants, hawks on hands, and dogs in leashes, were nearing the building.

"Ah, wretch!" said he, "is it thus you receive me, after your friendly invitation? I will return in three days, and woe be to you if I do not find the gates opened." He did return, and finding them in the same state, defied William to mortal combat by the mouth of his herald. This was another heart-scald to the good-intentioned man; but his lady told him she would quit his castle, and never re-enter it if he refused the challenge.

He did accept it, was slain, and his head flung over the wall by his resentful brother. This humbled the fierce lady. She sold the estate, dismissed her servitors, retired to a convent, and endured unheard-of penances till her death. The little hill on which the castle stood got the name of the "Mound of the Last William."



THE LEGEND OF MAC CORISH.

In the partly ruined building of Castle Lake on the western bank of the Suir, about two and a-half miles from the Rock of Cashel, is yet preserved a very rude representation in iron of a horse and his rider. It is about a couple of feet in height, and has been kept in the building from some unknown period. A dwelling house is attached to the ruin, and the people of the neighbourhood say that one of the clauses of the lease of the grounds in which the castle stands, requires the tenant to see to the safe custody of the relic, and never allow it to be removed from the premises. Some fatality is sure to occur if *Mac Corish* is left out of doors during the night. This undesirable event took place on two occasions at some not very remote periods, and the dreaded results followed. During one of the nights a terrible storm prevailed for many miles around, and some calamity, whose nature we have not been fortunate enough to ascertain, did not fail to visit the family, or at all events the neighbourhood, on the second occasion also.

Our informant was born in the neighbourhood of the castle, and has seen and handled the *Mac Corish* more than once. Being of an inquiring incredulous turn (incredulous, to wit, on the subject of spirits being unprovided with better organs of speech than mahogany

tables), he suspects the iron effigy to be neither more nor less than one of the fire-dogs useful in the great chimney-pieces of old halls, when logs of wood supplied warmth to the large room. Be this as it may, the following are the circumstances told by the people of that neighbourhood in connection with THE LEGEND OF MAC CORISH.

At some period very far back, but how many hundred years no one knows, a chief or gentleman, named Mac Corish, lived in this castle, and owned a wide extent of the lands around. He could not properly be called a cruel man, but he was intensely proud and wrathful, and thought nothing of taking human life when these darling passions of his were strongly excited. He was tall, and strong, and skilful at all weapons; and during the course of a stormy youth and middle age, he had killed several gentlemen in chance-medley brawls or in duels. It was rather strange that he should have lived to see his fiftieth year; but although the slave of his passions, and nearly destitute of devotional feeling, he was possessed of some good qualities. He was kind and courteous to his domestics, labourers, and tenants, and the common people in general; and several of the encounters in which he had been engaged were caused by the representations of friends or followers, of wrong or insult received at the hands of some overbearing or tyrannical neighbour.

His great popularity among the middle and lower classes was a shield against private resentment and legal prosecution, especially as — revenge indulged in cold blood not being among his faults — the crime of murder never came to be imputed to him. As he advanced in life he found the number of acquaintances, of his own or a higher rank, much diminished. Very few coveted the intimacy of one “whose passion was so near him,” and whose self-estimation was so sensitive; and at last he saw, or wished to see, the faces of none but those of his own household, or the tenants who rented his lands, and who, while they loved him for his easy indulgence and his readiness to take their parts in all causes, right or wrong, shivered to their very marrow at the sight of his frown, or the sound of his voice, in his occasional fits of anger.

These circumstances, joined to a natural taste for agricultural pursuits, led to his continual occupation in the management of the fields that lay round the castle. His operations were seldom successful owing to his impatience. It was a torment to him to witness the imperceptible advance of vegetation, and of young cattle to maturity ; and bad weather always called forth the worst features of his disposition. His irritable impatience was probably much strengthened by a morbid condition of nerves, and had become a disease through the absence of religious influence, and his yielding in every instance to his impatient, resentful, or angry impulses, without an attempt at self-restraint.

During some unfavourable days in the hay-season he was kept in a state of the most miserable agitation by the uncertainty of saving the product of a fine meadow that lay between the castle and the river. After a very troubled night he was most agreeably surprised by a glorious forenoon, and vigorously did he toil with his crowd of assistants, and much did he exult, till, towards one o'clock in the afternoon, a heavy shower came down, and drove all inside the castle. His family and domestics suffered much during the next three quarters of an hour, witnessing the agitated state in which he paced his hall, muttering and uttering imprecations. On a sudden the clouds parted, the sun shone, and all rushed out to resume their labours. Mac Corish was at their head ; but scarcely had the eager troop reached the castle gates when the opening in the sky was again obscured, a clap of thunder immediately succeeded a blinding flash of lightning, and a deluge of rain swept down on castle, meadow, and wood.

They saw Mac Corish stand for a moment with his features convulsed by fury, then rush into the hall, appear again with his sheathed sword in his hand, enter the stable, bring out his favourite steed, mount, draw his sword, and spur out across the drawbridge as if pursuing his deadly foe. Some ran up to the battlements of the surrounding walls, and some to the summits of the corner towers, and thence they could see their master ride to and fro through the meadow, his hat off, his clothes in disorder, his sword as it were cutting and wounding the air in wild sweeps,

and cries and threats issuing from his lips, as with his furious features turned upwards he seemed defying the powers of the air. While they gazed, terror-stricken, they saw on a sudden the horse running violently in the direction of the river, Mac Corish appearing to make some ineffectual efforts to stop and turn him. He plunged into the turbid water, carrying his rider with him, and they looked no more. All left the castle at once, and hastened to the spot, many of them shouting out their wayward master's name in grief and terror, but no appearance of horse or rider could be seen. They unceasingly dragged the water the rest of that day, and part of the next, till about noon one party found their net stayed by some obstruction. They heaved it to land, but instead of horse or man, they dragged ashore the rude iron image before mentioned. It was brought to the castle, where its presence caused no small awe ; and there it has since remained, a monument of the awful result of irreligion and unchecked passion.

Those readers who fancy that they have obtained but few grains of wheat in this our bushel of chaff, and find their desire for sound historical food not so much gratified, as excited, are referred to the healthy refection prepared for them in Eugene O'Curry's "Materials for Irish History," Mrs. Ferguson's "Story of the Irish before the Conquest," and the carefully compiled and excellent histories prepared by Sister M. F. Cusack, A. M. Sullivan, and Martin Haverty. The Irish MSS. dispersed through the various European libraries being edited and translated in the course of the coming century, a second Macaulay, as gifted as the first, but less prejudiced, will issue in 1971 and the four succeeding years, that history of our country, which will remain the standard record till the visitation of the terrible Fijian or New Zealander, of whom the world is sufficiently wearied.

THE END.

GLOSSARY.

- ATHASSEL : *ath isiol*, *ath isiul* in the text ; secret ford, hence ford of treachery.
- BANGOR, *Beinnchor* : pinnacles or pointed crags.
- CAILEACH : *cailleach* (*caille*, a veil, a cowl), an old woman, a nun.
- CATHACH (*cath*, battle) : copy of a portion of the Scripture in the handwriting of St. Colum-Cille, mentioned in the text. When carried by a sinless person round the camp of Clann Conaill before an engagement, it was supposed to ensure their victory.
- CEASH CORAIN : correctly *Ceis Corran*, wicker causeway of the reaping hooks ; *ceis corranach*, crooked causeway. *Ceash* is a cross. Irish names in which the sound *kish* is heard mark localities where boggy passes were traversed on a layer of boughs and twigs.
- CLAEN : squint-eyed. Congal, the ungrateful foster-son of the good king Donall, was subject to this infirmity, till the eye affected was knocked out by king Suivne's chessman.
- CLONMACNOIS : the meadow of the sons of Nos, a personage mentioned in the Chronicles.
- COBHTHACH : victorious, now represented by the family name Coffey.
- CRUACHAN : a stack, a round hill ; the ancient royal fortress of Conacht, present name Rathcroghan.
- CURADH : companion, *i.e.*, knight-companion. How did *cnecht*, German for servant-man, come to have the same noble meaning ?
- DIARMUIDH (*dearmad*, forgetfulness). The word appears all through the text as it is commonly pronounced, but in Irish composition the correct spelling is *Diarmuid* or *Diarmaid*.
- DROGHEDA : *Drochad* or *droichiod-atha*, the bridge at (or over) the ford.
- EMANIA (*Eo*, brooch ; *Muin*, neck) ; the royal fortress of Ulster. For the selection of the name see text,—"How Emania was built."
- FINGLAS (*Fionn*, fair : *Glaise* [pr. *glasha*] a stream) ; clear stream.
- GAISCA, *Gaisgeach* ; a hero, a term much affected by fireside storytellers.
- GORT : a garden or tilled field : *gurtheen* is the diminutive. Guairé's residence was called *Gort-innsi-Guairé*, "The field of the isle of Guairé."
- GRAINNE (*Grian*, the Sun). *Grian* being of the feminine gender in the Celtic as well as the Teutonic languages, the name was probably appropriated to the Gaelic princess as implying her irresistible and transcendent beauty. Various oblong enclosures throughout Ireland, marked out by upright stones, are called by the peasants, *Leapacha Diarmuda agus Ghrainne*, "Beds of Diarmuidh and Grainne."

HY BREASIL (*Iath*, Island ; *Breasamhuil* pr. nearly as *breasuil*—princely). *Breas* (prince) will be found in the second historical legend of the work. The Danish *Hy* corresponds with *Iath*.

INIS CUILEANN (correctly *Cuilin*) : island of the Holly.

KILLARNEY, *Cill Airneadh* : Church of the Sloes. The ancient name was *Loch Leane*, the "Lake of Lean" of the White Teeth, a skilful artizan having his dwelling by that Elysian water.

KNOCKLONG, *Cnoc Luinghe*; hill of the encampment, the spot selected by Cormac to set up the standard of Leath Cuinn when he invaded Munster. When Mocha Ruith was about to put an end to the drought he bade Ceanvar (correctly Ceann Mhor, great head) to bring him his spear. This he darted into the air, and Ceanvar digging at the point where it fell, out gushed the first stream of relief. Dr. P. W. Joyce visited this well some time since. He says of it;—"It lies on the road side in the townland of Glenbrohane near the boundary of the parish of Emlygrennan, three miles to the south of Knocklong; and it springs from a chasm evidently artificial, dug in the side of Slieveareagh, forming at once a very fine stream. It is still well known in the district by the name of *Tobar Canvore*, 'Canvore's well,' as I found by a very careful inquiry; so that Canvore has received his reward." *Irish Names of Places*, 1st ed., p. 95.

LAOCH : a hero, *Oglach*, military retainer (*Og* and *Laoch*) ; *Galloglach*, a foreign soldier, a mercenary.

LEACHA RAIDHNE or *Raithneach*, the stones among the fern.

LEATH (correctly LIATH) DRUIM : the Grey Hill-Ridge, the ancient name of Tara.

LIOS, pr. *lish* : a fort consisting of an earthen mound with ditches, as distinguished from a *caiseal* or stone fortification; the word DUN includes both kinds of strongholds.

MAYO, *Magh Eo* : plain of the yew trees.

MOYLE : sea stream of; that part of the sea which lies between Ireland and Scotland. It has its name from the Mull (*mullach*, mound) of Cantyre; *ceann tir*, headland.

NAAS, Nas : fair or place of public meeting.

NEWRY, *Ibar Cian Trachta*, more correctly *Iubhar Cinn Tragha* : "the yew at the head of the strand." The planting of this yew is attributed to St. Patrick. The present name is a modification of *An Iubhar*, pr. *an yure*, the article *an* (the) being sometimes prefixed to proper names in old books. Rathnure, in the parish of Killanne, Co. Wexford, means the "Fort of the Yew Trees."

SIGHE or *Sidhe* : a fairy, a spiritualized Danaan. The word in some instances denotes the hill-caverns, or rather palaces, in which they reside. A *sighe-gaoithe* (pr. *shia geha*) is a fairy blast, a whirlwind. *Sheeoge* is the name applied in Leinster to these wayward spirits.

SLIOCHD : race, lineage, stem. The Argyll family call themselves *An Sliochd nan Diarmaid*.

TARA. Legendary derivation : *Teamur*, the wall or building of Tea, wife of Heremon. "*Teamhair*, pr. *Tawer* (we quote Dr. Joyce),

signifies an elevated spot commanding an extensive prospect. The *teamhair* of a house is a balcony, and the *teamhair* of a country, a hill commanding a wide view. The genitive of *teamhair* is *teamhrach* (pr. *taragh* or *towragh*), and it is this form which has given its present name to Tara in Meath."

ULADH : a tomb or penitential station, the ancient name of Ulster.

We would here gladly enlarge on the merits of Dr. Joyce's admirable work on the derivations of Irish local names, but for the very great probability that his book is in the hands of every one whom this little attempt of ours may reach.

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